THE GROWTH OF THE IDEA OF COMMONWEALTH IN INDIA, 1900-1929.

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Abstract

Early Indian nationalists took pride in their membership of the British Empire and looked upon the British connection as providential. They criticised what they considered to be 'un-British' in the administration of their country and demanded the right of self-government as British subjects. This phase of liberal and loyal nationalism lasted until 1905.

British policy in India, though progressive and liberal, lacked almost until 1917 a sense of direction. The vastness and complexity of the Indian problem did not permit British statesmen to treat the Congress ideal of self-government for India on the Dominion model as a practical proposition. The impact of a fast developing Indian nationalism, of radical democracy at home, and of the First World War, however, induced a bolder and more imaginative approach, which found expression in the announcement of 20 August 1917. Significant steps were taken in the years that followed in the direction of ultimate Dominion Status for India.

The current of political thought in India in the post-war period ran too fast for the gradual and deliberate process contemplated in 1917. Dissatisfied with what they considered to be their slow progress towards self-government and distrustful of British intentions, many Indians developed a strong antipathy to their rulers. The British Empire savoured to them of racial domination and economic exploitation and they wanted to sever all connection with it. But there were

other Indians who, conscious of what they owed to British friends and teachers, did not allow their patriotism to take an anti-British hue. Moderate men of all parties in India were anxious to attain freedom without breaking the close ties woven by a long connection with England. They looked upon the Commonwealth as a hopeful experiment in wider international cooperation to whose success India could contribute through her continued association.

Contents

Part III

The Bridge between East and West.

Introduction

This dissertation is a study of the attitudes of the three major political parties in India - the Indian National Congress, the National Liberal Federation of India and the All-India Muslim League - towards the Empire-Commonwealth during the years 1900-29. The reasons why the present enquiry has been confined only to these three political parties may be stated at once: they alone were all-India organisations worth the name; they alone did any conscious thinking on the subject; and between them they could well claim to represent the main currents of organised public opinion in the country.

The year 1900 has no special significance either in Imperial or Indian history. It has been adopted in the title as a convenient substitute for the longer and more cumbrous phrase 'since the beginning of the present century'. In order to provide the necessary background, the first chapter is devoted to a fairly detailed analysis of Indian political thought on the subject during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. It is possible to offer a more plausible explanation for the choice of the closing date. In the year 1929 Lord Irwin made the famous announcement in which he affirmed, on the authority of His Majesty's Government, that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress as contemplated in the declaration of 1917 was the attainment of Dominion Status, and gave notice for the calling of a round table conference in order to secure a comprehensive settlement of the Indian problem. The year ended significantly with

the declaration by the Congress at Lahore that complete independence was the goal of its endeavour.

The period which began during the South African War and ended with the meeting of the Conference on the Operation of Dominion Legislation and Merchant Shipping Legislation was perhaps the most momentous in intra-Commonwealth affairs and affords many facets for fruitful study.

No apology is needed for the choice of the subject itself. The transformation of the British Empire into the modern Commonwealth has been one of the most remarkable events of our age and provides a perennial source of interest to the students of history. The subject has a special significance for students from those parts of the Empire which have grown or are growing into the sphere of the Commonwealth. It is a record of life which is their own. And even where it is not directly and immediately so, it affords a wider perspective which is essential to the proper understanding of the histories of their own individual countries. It would be a mistake, for example, to examine the history of India under British rule merely as the outcome of her relationship with Great Britain without taking into account the developments, both past and contemporaneous, in other parts of the Empire, for it would mean ignoring some of the deepest, most essential and most fruitful factors that have gone into its making. Neither logic nor accident but historical experience has been the mainspring of British Imperial policy. Nor can it be denied that the history of the British Empire has a certain

unity and rhythm of its own.

The study of the growth of the idea of Commonwealth in India is full of interest not only with reference to Indian history, but to Commonwealth history as a whole. The modern Commonwealth is a living monument to the constructive genius of the British people, but it has been made as much by nationalism in the distant parts of the Empire as by British statesmanship. Enthusiasts and heretics, imperialists and nationalists - all have contributed to its shaping. It has been truly a work of challenge and response. If Canadians are proud of the fact that their country has played a major part in the long, peaceful evolution through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries which has transformed the British Empire into the British Commonwealth, Indians may take pride in the fact that in the evolution of the modern multi-racial Commonwealth their country has played a significant and often a decisive role.

The contribution which the older Dominions made to the evolution of the Commonwealth and their individual conceptions of the latter have been examined by many eminent scholars. The story has not been told so far from an Indian point of view. The present study is a modest attempt to fill this gap. It concerns itself with a neglected aspect of both Imperial and Indian history.

The main theme of this dissertation is the growth of the Commonwealth idea in India. It is not a political or constitutional history of the period. As internal politics dominated the scene and exercised a direct and immediate

influence upon the attitudes of the various parties towards the Empire-Commonwealth, they have been closely examined. An attempt has, however, been made to confine the study of domestic issues to what is strictly relevant to an analysis of the principal theme.

This is an essay in contemporary history. But the subject with which it deals is now past politics enough. Nor does it suffer from any dearth of material for a proper historical study. The sources of information for the study of the subject are mainly in printed form. They may be classified as follows:

i) Published proceedings of the various party conferences in authorised or press reports;

ii) Books and pamphlets dealing generally with the political and constitutional issues of the period;

iii) Biographies, memoirs and letters, both in print and in manuscript (where they can be consulted), of the chief public figures of the time;

iv) Articles in newspapers and magazines;

v) Reports of debates in Parliament and in the Indian legislature;

vi) Government publications; and

vii) Official documents, in so far as they are open to public inspection.

The realm of intellect offers great opportunities for more systematic and intensive cultivation but rarely a virgin field. Intellectual discoverers and explorers seem to have

been everywhere. There is no dearth of books dealing with the history of the Indian national movement or with the constitutional and political issues of the period. Stray references in such general works to the attitude of Indians towards the Empire-Commonwealth are not hard to find. Intra-Commonwealth affairs have found able historians, but there have been only a few, like Professors W.K.Hancock, A.B.Keith and N.Mansergh, who have really attempted to bring the light of Commonwealth history to bear on Indian problems. Writers on Indian history, even when they have been British, have generally lacked the necessary Commonwealth perspective. The two notable exceptions have been Professors J. Coatman and R. Coupland. No attempt has, however, been made so far to examine closely how politically-minded Indians thought about the Empire-Commonwealth. What did the British Empire mean to the early Indian nationalists? What was their idea of India's place therein? How did the ideal of self-government for India on the Colonial model grow? How did the concept of Dominion Status come to be applied to India? What did it signify to Indian nationalists? What part did India play in the evolution of the modern Commonwealth? How did the Congressmen, the Liberals and the Muslims look at the Commonwealth? Why was India's continued association with the Commonwealth valued by people in India and in England? These are some of the questions to which answers have been attempted in the following pages.

PART I

IMPERIALISM, NATIONALISM AND THE COMMONWEALTH

CHAPTER I

THE GROWTH OF INDIAN NATIONALISM AND BRITISH POLICY IN INDIA, 1885-1910.

The Birth of Indian Nationalism

In 1884 Sir John Strachey, who had had a long and distinguished career in the Indian Civil Service, delivered a series of lectures on India at the University of Cambridge. He began by telling his audience that 'the first and most essential thing to learn about India' was that 'there is not, and never was an India'. Nor need it be feared, Strachey added, that the bonds of union fashioned by British rule could ever 'in any way lead towards the growth of a single Indian nationality'. 'However long may be the duration of our dominion,' he remarked, 'however powerful may be the centralising attraction of our government, or the influence of the common interests which grow up, no such issue can follow.' To Strachey it seemed 'impossible' 'that men of Bombay, the Punjab, Bengal, and Madras should ever feel that they belong to one great Indian nation'.[1]

Early next year, in 1885, another Indian civil servant, Henry Cotton, published a book entitled New India in which he pointed out that significant changes were taking place in India and a new nation was rising before their eyes. Mainly as a result of British rule, wrote Cotton, and especially because of the growth of English education, a feeling of nationality was fast developing in India which needed only an organisation

1. Strachey, India: Its Administration and Progress, pp.1-2, 5, 7-8.

to crystallise.[1]

In the event, it was Cotton's judgment which proved to be correct. Before the year 1885 ran out the spirit of nationality in India had found a body in the Indian National Congress.

The factors which contributed towards the growth of a national movement in India may be noted briefly, The British Raj, which united and held together the vast sub-continent and ensured its peace and security, made a pan-Indian political consciousness possible. The spread of English education and of Western ideas of liberty, equality and nationality provided the motive force. Encouragement was given to it by the growth of self-government in the Colonies and the national movements in Europe - the unification of Italy and Germany, and, more especially, the Home Rule agitation in Ireland. It was aided by the increasing estrangement and bitterness between educated Indians and the English civilians in India.

The Congress, however, did not begin as an organisation in opposition to British rule. It owed its origin to the initiative of a retired British civil servant, A.O.Hume; it was blessed by the Viceroy of the day, Lord Dufferin. Hume had the sympathy and wisdom to understand that 'the broadcast dissemination of Western education and Western ideas of liberty, the rights of subjects, public spirit and patriotism' had let loose forces in India which needed control and direction into

1. Cotton, New India, pp.3ff. Charles Dilke noted these developments as early as 1868 on a visit to India. See Greater Britain, pp.548ff.

channels through which they might 'flow, not to ravage and destroy but to fertilise and regenerate'.[1] The Congress was to serve the purpose of 'a safety-valve' an 'overt and constitutional channel' for the discharge of the Indian ferment.[2] Its fundamental objectives were laid down to be the promotion of Indian nationality, the social, moral and political advancement of the Indian people, and 'the consolidation of the union between England and India, by securing the modification of such of its conditions as may be unjust or injurious'.[3] 'Unswerving loyalty to the British Crown' was to be 'the key-note of the institution'. 'The continued affiliation of India to Great Britain, at any rate for a period far exceeding the range of any practical forecast,' was considered 'to be absolutely essential to the interests of our own national development'.[4]

The Congress was to work not to supplant the British Government in India, but to supplement it. It was to acknowledge frankly and gratefully the many blessings of British rule and seek their extension. Real grievances were to be voiced and reasonable concessions demanded in a loyal and temperate manner. The people of India were to be educated into 'a genuine parliamentary frame of mind'[5] and the virtues of united, patient, constitutional agitation. The authorities in India and England were to be acquainted with the needs and

1. W. Wedderburn, Allan Octavian Hume, p.66.
2. Ibid. p.77.
3. Ibid. p.47.
4. Ibid. p.53.
5. Ibid. p.65.

aspirations of their Indian fellow-subjects. Official acts and omissions were to be subjected to fair criticism. Suggestions and modifications were to be offered in order to make the British administration in India more beneficent. The Congress was to insist that British policy in India be guided by the noble spirit which inspired the Act of 1833 and the Queen's proclamation of 1858. It was to demand that the rights and privileges of British citizenship be gradually extended to Indians.

The Character of the Early Congress

For twenty years at least the Congress retained the temper and spirit of its founders. Four Britons presided over its annual sessions during these years;[1] its strategy and tactics continued to be determined by men like Hume [2] and William Wedderburn. This close association of Englishmen imparted to the Congress a moderate and liberal character. By precept and example these devoted English friends impressed upon the Congress strict constitutionalism in its methods, firm loyalty towards the British Government, and faith in the sense of justice and freedom of the British people.

The early Congress was more of a dignified debating society. Every year at Christmas time a few hundred fairly intelligent and Europeanised Indians from all parts of the country met in some big town for three or four days, reviewed

1. George Yule (1888); William Wedderburn (1889); Alfred Webb (1894); Henry Cotton (1904).
2. Hume remained the General Secretary of the Congress from 1885 until his death in 1912.

the events of the year, passed a few academic resolutions and dispersed to meet again. They gave voice to the public opinion of the country taking shape, presented their demands, criticised the shortcomings of administration and offered their suggestions. Their tone was loyal and moderate; their criticism lacked bitterness. They were no professional politicians or agitators. Though ideologues, they were no rainbow-chasers or whistlers for the moon. They urged redress of acknowledged grievances and demanded practical reforms. They never desired to subvert British rule or substitute another in its place.

Official testimony on this score is overwhelming. Dufferin wrote to the Secretary of State in 1886 that amongst the natives he had met there were 'a considerable number who (were) both able and sensible and upon whose loyal coopera - tion one could undoubtedly rely'.[1] He admitted that 'the objects even of the advanced party (were) neither very dangerous nor very extravagant'.[2] Lansdowne wrote in 1891 that the Congress was 'reasonable and moderate in its tone', and that 'most of its proposals (had) reference to questions which (had) at one time or another been treated by the Government of India as subjects open to discussion'.[3] 'With a free Press and the right of public meeting,' he added, 'we shall always have some organisation of this kind to deal with. I doubt whether it could, upon the whole, assume a more innocuous shape than that

1. Dufferin to Kimberley, 26 April 1886.
2. Ibid.
3. Lansdowne to Cross, 28 January 1891.

which it now takes.'[1] Elgin, whose viceroyalty (1894-98) is said to mark the beginning of Indian unrest, did not agree with the opinion of the Secretary of State that Congressmen were disloyal.[2] 'Some of them are discontented men,' he wrote, 'but I do not believe that a man like Mr. Mehta wishes to overthrow the British Government.'[3] Elgin believed that they were 'men of intelligence' whose proper place was in the legislative councils.[4] 'The leading men of the Congress Party,' he remarked, 'when brought face to face with practical administration, whether in the form of legislation or otherwise, are more disposed to deal with it reasonably than demagogues further west.'[5] Even the Conservative Secretary of State, George Hamilton, who often complained of the lack of active loyalty in India and despaired of the future of the British Raj, remarked in 1899: 'I look upon the Congress movement as an uprising of Indian Native opinion against, not British rule, but Anglo-Indian bureaucracy.'[6]

The truth of Hamilton's remark was vindicated almost immediately afterwards. When the South African War broke out in late October 1899 Indian nationalists displayed what Curzon described as 'a most exemplary and gratifying loyalty'.[7] There

1. Ibid.
2. 'I do not myself admit that these men are disloyal.' Elgin to Hamilton, 25 August 1896.
3. Ibid. On 7 October 1896 Elgin wrote: 'I always have some doubts when I hear of the disloyalty of the Press.' There was, he said, amongst Indians, 'no desire to substitute for British authority a native, far less another foreign rule'. Elgin to Hamilton, 7 October 1896.
4. Elgin to Hamilton, 21 April 1897.
5. Elgin to Hamilton, 23 December 1897.
6. Hamilton to Curzon, 20 October 1899.
7. Curzon to Hamilton, 28 December 1899.

is considerable annoyance,' Curzon wrote to the Secretary of State, 'that no native troops are sent (to South Africa), on the ground that it implies a distrust of their loyalty and a derogation of the great position that India holds in the Empire.'[1]

The antipathy of early Indian nationalists to the bureaucracy did not imply any want of loyalty to the Throne or the Empire.[2] When in 1902 Curzon asked Indians to feel for the Empire with Englishmen a 'composite patriotism' and to accept the union of England and India, which was 'so mysterious as to have in it something of the divine', [3] his words struck a responsive chord in the hearts of G.K.Gokhale [4] and B.G.Tilak [5] alike. Sidney Low, who accompanied the Prince of Wales during the latter's visit to India in December 1905, wrote that he did not think there was much disloyalty even among the agitators of the platform and the native press, still less among those who listened to their exhortations. 'The journey of the Prince of Wales showed that there is a deep and widespread attachment to the Imperial House among the Indian people, that even where there is discontent with

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1. Ibid.
2. On this point see Theodore Morison, Imperial Rule in India, pp.50 ff.
3. The full text of Curzon's speech is to be found in Thomas Raleigh, Lord Curzon in India, pp.480-9.
4. Gokhale was the leader of the moderate and loyal nationalists. For his reaction to Curzon's speech see Proceedings of the Council of the Governor-General of India, 1902, vol.XLI, p.141.
5. Tilak is usually known as the 'father of Indian unrest'. He had already in 1897 been convicted of 'disaffection' and was soon afterwards to become the leader of the extreme nationalists. For his reaction to Curzon's speech see Speeches of Srj. B.G.Tilak, pp.11-7.

the mode of government there is no feeling against the Throne. Nor, I imagine, is there any hostility to the Empire and the Flag, so far as the meaning of these terms is understood.' Low cited the instance of Calcutta in support of his conclusion. The city was, he wrote, in the trough of a furious agitation against the partition of Bengal, but when the Prince visited it he was received by its 'angry population' 'not only with cordiality and good humour but even with demonstrative enthusiasm'.[1]

The Faith of Early Congressmen

Educated Indians in the latter half of the nineteenth century were full of admiration, almost adulation, for British history and culture. They were Anglo-maniacs rather than anti-British. They were full of gratitude for the manifold advantages derived by their country from the British connection. They frankly and loyally accepted British rule because they were convinced that 'that rule alone could secure to the country the peace and order which were necessary for slowly evolving a nation out of the heterogeneous elements of which it was composed,and for ensuring to it a steady advance in different directions'.[2] They had a strong belief that the great English people would prove to be their deliverers, and that slowly but surely they would admit Indians as equal sharers in their noble inheritance of freedom. It was this gratitude for the past and hope for the future which made

1. Sidney Low, A Vision of India, pp.362-3.
2. G.K.Gokhale, Speeches, p.1006.

men like Govind Ranade, Pherozeshah Mehta and Gopal Krishna Gokhale talk of the British connection as 'Providential'.The Indian leaders of the early Congress were no failed B.A.'s or Macaulay's Frankenstein. They were men who devoted the best part of their lives to the study of the mighty English literature, who found solace in English poetry, and whose minds were nurtured on English history, law and political thought. They valued English political institutions as the acme of human genius and were inspired by 'the large-hearted liberalism of the nineteenth century English politics'.[1] It was not their fault if they desired to imitate the model held out to them and believed with the poet that:

'We must be free who speak
The language Shakespeare spake.'

'Just look for a moment,' said Sankaran Nair in 1897, 'at the training we are receiving. From our earliest school-days the great English writers have been our classics. Englishmen have been our professors in colleges. English history is taught us in our schools. The books we generally read are English books .....It is impossible under this training not to be penetrated with English ideas, not to acquire English conceptions of duty, of rights, of brotherhood.....Imbued with these ideas and principles, we naturally desire to acquire the full rights and to share the responsibilities of British citizenship.....'[2]

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1. R.Tagore, Crisis in Civilization, p.2.
2. Congress Presidential Addresses, First Series, pp.320-1.

The early leaders of the Congress knew by heart the Charter Act of 1833, the Queen's proclamation of 1858, and all that Burke or Bright, Macaulay or Munro, Elphinstone or Malcolm had said about the purpose of British rule in India. They shared the belief in England's mission in their country. A disillusioned and faithless generation may well consider them to-day as the greatest dupes of Whig history and oratory. But those who lived in that age of hope and faith and innocence were convinced that the early British rulers of India - just, righteous and freedom - loving as they were - had deliberately adopted 'the path of wisdom, of national prosperity, and of national honour'. For how else to explain that at a time when Indians did not fully understand their rights and were too unenlightened even to ask for them, the statesmen of England of their own free will decided what the policy of their country ought to be towards India. They declared in unmistakable and unambiguous terms that it was to be a policy of justice and equality, that the possession of India was a solemn trust with them, that the moral and material well-being of her people was the primary object of British rule, that Englishmnen were not to form a governing caste in the country, and that Indians were to be helped to advance steadily to a position of equality so that they might in due course acquire the capacity to govern themselves in accordance with the higher standards of the West. And then, after the Mutiny, when India lay prostrate, instead of rescinding the earlier freely conceded rights, British statesmen gave Indians that

glorious proclamation of 1858, animated by the same high and noble resolve as before and embodying the germ of all that Indians could aim at in the present or desire in the future. This was the manner in which Dadabhai Naoroji always reasoned and explained. And his advice to his countrymen regarding their course of action was very simple: Remind the Government and the British people of their pledges and demand their fulfilment. Take your stand upon British charters and proclamations and insist that the rights of British citizenship be granted to you. If the bureaucracy in India refuse to listen, approach the British Demos. 'Nothing is more dear,' he assured his people, 'to the heart of England - and I speak from actual knowledge - than India's welfare; and if we only speak out loud enough, and persistently enough, to reach that busy heart, we shall not speak in vain.'[1] To the people of Britain he said: Indians are either 'British citizens or British helots'. Tell us frankly how you mean to treat us. Speak out 'with your English manliness' whether 'you really mean to fulfil the pledges given before the world, and in the name of God or to get out of them'.[2]

'This spring-time of Indian nationalism,' writes Guy Wint about the last two decades of the nineteenth century, 'was perhaps its fairest period. The public mind if ardent was yet generous; if naïve it was also appealing; if unpractical it was responsive to reason. It was a tragedy that the

1. Naoroji, Speeches and Writings, p.18.
2. Ibid. p.210.

government allowed so early a breach to come between itself and this Indian patriotism which did no more than repeat the commonplaces of English political platforms and desired no more than to be accepted by the British as partners in the administration of their country.'[1]

The Alienation of the Congress

The story of this tragic breach has often been told. In part, it was a natural and inevitable process caused by the growth of education, of racial and national consciousness, and of a hyper-critical attitude towards an alien administration which, however benevolent, could never be really popular. The British civil service in India is often blamed for widening the gulf between the governors and the governed by its lack of tact and imagination. It became, it is said, a huge lifeless machine, an indoor-bureaucracy, an army of note-manufacturers, losing contact with both the old India and the new. Its mind was 'tempted to stand still'; its arteries hardened; and even its general intellectual calibre declined. Lansdowne was persuaded that half the troubles in India could be avoided if the officials manifested 'a little more gentleness and consideration' towards the people.[2] Curzon complained bitterly of the 'mediocrity' of the civil servant of his day, his lack of 'interest in India as India and in the Indian people', and his tendency to 'regard himself as an unfortunate exile in a land of regrets'.[3] Hamilton believed that 'the

1. G. Schuster and G. Wint, India and Democracy, pp.93-4.
2. Lansdowne to Cross, 8 October 1890.
3. Curzon to Hamilton, 11 March 1900, 21 May 1902.

main cause of the unpopularity' which attached to British rule in India was 'the angularity and rigidity of officialdom'.[1] There is a good deal of truth in these accusations, but it would be only just to recognise the difficulties facing the officialdom. An orderly, regularised, symmetrical administration left no room for a spirit of adventure and enterprise. Not even the highest-placed official could dare to interfere with the stupendous and extremely artificial structure of the Raj. The natural temptation, therefore, was to govern and change nothing. The Indian Civil Service looked upon itself as the guardian of the people and hated the pretensions of educated Indians to pose as the representatives of the latter while, as it believed, in fact engaged in seeking jobs and distinctions for themselves. The most literary service in the world, it was prone to look down with contempt upon the educated and half-educated Babus. Severely practical by nature, it scorned the theories of arm-chair politicians. Trained to be dictatorial, it never cared to cultivate the confidence and cooperation of the governed. Conscientious, efficient, industrious, impartial and incorruptible, it judged educated Indians by its high standards and found them wanting. It was soured and embittered by the growing insolence and ingratitude displayed by the vocal sections in India. For the negative functions of administration it was well equipped, but it had no conception of the positive reconstruction of political, social and economic life of the country. It was convinced

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1. Hamilton to Curzon, 3 March 1900.

that any attempt 'to hustle the East' was a folly and that political concessions were a sin against the Holy Ghost. To rob the administration of its autocracy, it felt, was to rob it of its benevolence. The conditions of its existence in India and those of Indian social life had always imposed an almost insuperable barrier to real intimacy and understanding between the governors and the governed. The suspicion and hostility engendered by politics enormously complicated the situation.

The non-official British community in India took little interest in the affairs of the country. Its manners were far from being desirable. The isolated but frequent cases of cuffing, kicking and even killing of Indians were a constant source of infinite mischief. Nothing so shook the confidence of Indians in English justice as the fact that no Englishman accused of killing an Indian ever got a capital punishment. Nor was the Anglo-Indian press a model of sobriety and good manners.

But when all is said of the shortcomings of Englishmen in India, the fact remains that the evil was caused mainly by the failure of the British Government and Parliament to give guidance. Fearing the possible evil effects of the democracy at home on the Indian Empire or those of an 'utterly un-English', autocratic, 'Oriental Empire' upon that democracy itself, India was 'held at arm's length'.[1] British Governments - Conservative and Liberal alike - dreaded lest India

1. The quotations are from John Seeley, The Expansion of England, pp.190, 304.

be lost on the floor of Parliament. They tried their best to keep India away from the House of Commons and resented even the occasional questions asked in that chamber by a few radicals. Parliament lost its grip of Indian affairs. Even the periodic enquiries held in the time of John Company were allowed to lapse. The rare debates at Westminster on Indian questions, with hardly a dozen members in attendance, made a mockery of Parliamentary control. Indian nationalists appealed to the busy heart of England in vain. In the matter of the home charges, the British army in India and the cotton duties, the British Government behaved in a manner which successive Viceroys denounced as unjust and unfair. Not only did they provide Indian nationalists with permanent grievances, they shook, as Curzon warned,[1] the moral bases of British dominion in India. Similarly, in the matter of Indian indentured labour to the colonies, the British Government showed a lamentable want of foresight and caution which made the proud phrase 'Imperial citizenship' ring hollow in Indian ears.

The gravamen of the charge against the British Government and Parliament, however, would be that they failed in their primary duty of determining - what they alone could determine - the policy of the Government of India. Certainly the Government of India was to be in India, but Parliament was to lay down the lines on which the former was to run. Parliament and the Home Government had no sense of direction, no definite conception of the goal towards which the Govern-

1. Curzon to Hamilton, 22 July 1903.

ment of India was to travel. A double-headed machine like the Indian Government could only work satisfactorily if both its ends were inspired by a consistent, clear and definite purpose. Any such purpose was wholly lacking. An examination of the history of the passing of the Act of 1892 reveals that there was more imagination on the hill-tops of Simla than at Whitehall. It was the Government of India which proposed and pressed for a bold and liberal reform of the provincial legislative councils - the introduction of the elective principle, the increase in the non-official element of the councils, and the grant to the latter of the right of interpellation and partial control of the finances - while the democrats at Whitehall doubted and delayed.

The alienation of Indian nationalists from the Government was made inevitable by a yet more fundamental fact. The two main demands of the Congress were: 1) the more extensive employment of Indians in the higher administrative posts - and for achieving this it urged that the examination for the Indian Civil Service, then held only in England, should be held simultaneously in India and in England; and 2) the steady development of representative institutions in India. British statesmen - of both parties - were convinced that to concede any one of these demands would be to endanger the continuance of British supremacy in India. Lord Kimberley, the Liberal Secretary of State, was as emphatic as Lansdowne, the Conservative Viceroy, that come what may the predominance of the European element in the civil service must be main-

tained, and as the holding of examinations in India would imperil that predominance they could not be allowed.[1] Curzon believed that there were already too many Indians in the civil service. He warned the Secretary of State of 'the extreme danger of the system under which every year an increasing number of the 900 and odd higher posts that were meant, and ought to have been exclusively and specifically reserved for Europeans, are being filched away by the superior wits of the Native in the English examinations'. 'I believe it to be,' he added, 'the greatest peril with which our administration is confronted.'[2] The Secretary of State, George Hamilton, believed that 'one of the greatest mistakes that was made was the issue in the proclamation annexing India of the principle that perfect equality was to exist so far as all appointments were concerned, between European and Native'.[3]

The difficulties in the way of introducing representative institutions in India were many and obvious. The rooted fear in the minds of Imperial statesmen, however, that free institutions would be ultimately fatal to the continuance of British rule in India, enfeebled, if it did not altogether kill, the will to make a sound beginning on proper lines. 'You cannot apply constitutional principles,' wrote Dufferin, 'to a conquered country, in as much as self-government and submission to a foreign sovereign are incompatible terms.'[4]

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1. Kimberley to Lansdowne, 9 June 1893.
2. Curzon to Hamilton, 23 April 1900.
3. Hamilton to Curzon, 10 May 1900.
4. Dufferin to Cross, 20 October 1888.

Cross and Salisbury believed that the adoption of the principle of election in India would mean the beginning of the end of the British Raj, and, consequently, they had a mortal dread of even uttering the word 'election'. Hamilton was emphatic and clear: 'We cannot give the Natives what they want: representative institutions or the diminution of the existing establishment of Europeans is impossible.'[1] And so, concerned primarily with the maintenance of British rule in India, unable or unwilling to visualise that it could develop into something else, with their highest ideal a benevolent despotism in India, blind to the inevitable tendency of their own work in that country, Imperial statesmen in the last quarter of the nineteenth century almost lost the sense of a mission or purpose. Things in which British rule ought to have gloried became the objects of secret derision. Macaulay and Metcalfe were referred to as the villains of the piece. The introduction of 'free press, civil courts, literary education, competitive examinations as the test of a man's ability for higher office, and sundry other evils'[2] in India came to be regretted. Concessions to Indian public opinion were made grudgingly and without any conception of a larger purpose.

It was this realisation that English statesmen were opposed even to their most reasonable demands and had imposed a veto on their political future, that, more than anything else, shook the faith of Indian nationalists in the character and purpose of British rule and alienated them from their

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1. Hamilton to Curzon, 14 April 1899.
2. Hamilton to Curzon, 9 June 1901.

rulers. Gokhale amd Mehta, with their deep knowledge of English character and history, might still refuse to lose 'faith in the ultimate wisdom, beneficence, and righteousness of the English people', but the minds of the vast majority of educated Indians came to be filled with disappointment, anger, and even hostility. And while this unhappy development was taking place, Viceroys and Secretaries of State were drawing comfort from the thought that, as a result of their 'indifference and unconcern' towards its proceedings, the Congress was dying.[1] 'The Congress,' Curzon wrote home in November 1900, 'is tottering to its fall and one of my great ambitions while in India is to assist it to a peaceful demise.'[2]

The Colonial Model

The idea of ultimate self-government could not but be implanted in the minds of those who had been nurtured on English literature, history and political thought. Even before the Congress was founded Surendranath Banerjea was saying in 1880: 'The question of representative government looms not in the far-off distance. Educated India is beginning to feel that the time has come when some measure of self-government might be conceded to the people. Canada governs itself. Australia governs itself. And surely it is anomalous that the grandest dependency of England should continue to be governed upon wholly different principles.'[3] Henry Cotton's book New India, which was published in 1885 and read avidly by educated

1. Hamilton to Elgin, 11 December 1896.
2. Curzon to Hamilton, 18 November 1900.
3. Banerjea, Speeches, vol.i, p.224.

Indians, had advocated the ideal of a self-governing India organised on federal lines and placed 'on a fraternal footing with the Colonies of England'.[1] Cotton did not think that this ideal was capable of immediate realisation, but he wanted the British Government always to keep it before its eyes and direct all its efforts to that end. 'The emancipation of India,' he wrote, 'has become inevitable ever since a system of English education was established, and the principle of political equality accepted. It is now merely a matter of time.'[2] In the interval left to her, Cotton insisted, Britain should devote herself to the sublimer task of facilitating India's progress towards national unity and freedom.

The Congress, however, did not concern itself with the remote and impracticable ideal of self-government. Whether it was due to the advice and influence of their English mentors, or their own realism or timidity, early Congressmen contented themselves by demanding isolated reforms - increased share for Indians in administration and modest beginnings in representative institutions. This does not, however, mean that the ideal of a self-governing India was not at the back of many minds. As we have already noted, educated Indians were loyal because they were patriotic. Their faith in British justice, their avowals of loyalty to British rule and their perfervid orations about perpetuating it were inspired largely by the belief that their British rulers would train and enable them

1. Cotton, op.cit. pp.117, 121, 130.
2. Ibid. p.100.

to govern themselves. 'It should not be forgotten for a moment,' said Sankaran Nair in 1897, 'that the real link that binds us indissolubly to England is the hope, the well-founded hope and belief, that with England's help we shall, and under her guidance alone we can, attain national unity and national freedom.'[1] R.C.Dutt emphasised the same point in 1899 when he remarked that educated India had identified itself with British rule and was loyal to it because it was by a continuance of that rule that it could secure self-government.[2] The progress of self-government in the Colonies, more than any - thing else, gave Indian nationalists cause for hope and confidence. Will England refuse to her brown children what she gave to her white ones? Surendranath Banerjea remarked in 1895 that England was 'the august mother of free nations' and appealed to her 'gradually to change the character of her rule in India, to liberalise it, to adapt it to the newly developed environments of the country and the people, so that, in the fulness of time, India may find its place in the great confederacy of free states, English in their origin, English in their character, English in their institutions, rejoicing in their permanent and indissoluble union with England, a glory to the mother country, and an honour to the human race'.[3]

Though individual politicians dipped occasionally into the future, for many years after the inception of the Indian

1. Congress Presidential Addresses, First Series, p.320.
2. Report of the fifteenth Indian National Congress, 1899, p.11.
3. Report of the eleventh Indian National Congress, 1895, p.51.

National Congress its leaders were content to go along without committing the movement to a definite ideal. It was not till December 1899 that the Congress gave to itself a constitution, but even then it did not consider it worth while to declare in set terms what its ultimate objective was. The constitution merely said that 'the object of the Indian National Congress shall be to promote by constitutional means the interests and the well-being of India'.[1] But if the leaders of the Congress were so cautious and practical and timid, some of their British sympathisers had no such inhibitions. In his message to the people of India, read at the Lucknow Congress in December 1899, W.S.Caine said: 'My belief in their future as a great self-governing portion of the British Empire, and my conviction of their natural capacity for self-government deepens and strengthens every year.'[2] At the Calcutta Congress in December 1901 John Smedley remarked: 'These resolutions seem to me to be making so small a demand, that they will be glad to allow you these little things to keep you off from Home Rule. My last word is: 'Go in for Home Rule for India', and the blessings of God rest upon your efforts.'[3] It was, however, left to Sir Henry Cotton to raise the cry of self-government on the Colonial model for India in unmistakable terms from the Congress platform. Presiding over the Bombay session of the Congress in December 1904, Cotton remarked that autonomy was the keynote of

1. Report of the fifteenth Indian National Congress, 1899,p.28.
2. Report of the fifteenth Indian National Congress, 1899,p.8.
3. Report of the seventeenth Indian National Congress, 1901, p. 157.

England's true relations with her great Colonies, it was the keynote also of India's destiny. Cotton sketched his vision of 'the United States of India, placed on a fraternal footing with the self-governing Colonies....under the aegis of Great Britain' and added: 'This is a forecast of the future, dim and distant though it be, the gradual realization of which is the privilege of Government to regulate, and the aim and hope and aspiration of the Indian people to attain.'[1]

Cotton's vision of India's future came as a message of hope to the older leaders of the Congress. Their patience was being sorely tried by Curzon's policies. Their methods and record were being questioned by the younger generation. Gokhale incorporated the ideal of Colonial self-government in the preamble to the rules of his Servants of India Society founded in June 1905.[2] In the autumn of 1905, while on a visit to England, he put it forward as the ultimate goal of the educated classes in India from numerous platforms. In his message to the Indian people in November 1905, Naoroji emphasised 'the absolute necessity of freedom and self-government like that of the Colonies' as 'the only remedy for India's woes and wrongs'.[3] Presiding over the 1905 session of the Congress, Gokhale observed: 'The goal of the Congress is that India should be governed in the interests of the Indians themselves, and that, in course of time, a form of government should be attained in this country similar to what exists in

1. Report of the twentieth Indian National Congress, 1904, pp.37-8.
2. The Servants of India Society, pp.2-3.
3. Naoroji, op.cit. p.652.

the self-governing Colonies of the British Empire.'[1] In an interview with John Morley on 1 August 1906, Gokhale acquainted the Liberal Secretary of State with the ultimate hope and design of the Congress - 'India to be on the footing of a self-governing Colony' - and was met with the rejoinder that 'for many a day to come - long beyond the short span of time that may be left to me - this was a mere dream'.[2] But Gokhale could not afford to be discouraged. Curzon had raised a storm in India by his words and deeds. He had bred a spirit of resentment amongst the educated classes and brought them face to face with their rulers. As a combative response to his partition of Bengal, a boycott movement had been started in that province. A new school of thought had developed within the Congress which began to preach the ideal of 'absolute autonomy' and 'freedom' from British rule. A 'new patriotism' had grown up as opposed to the 'old' 'loyal patriotism' of the founders of the Congress.

The Rise of Radical Nationalism

The rise of radical nationalism in India, which became marked since 1905, was at once a conservative and a revolutionary phenomenon. It drew its inspiration, on the one hand, from the reaction towards Indian religion and Indian ways of life of which the chief exponents had been Dayanand and Vivekanand in the last quarter of the 19th century. On the other hand, it tried to apply to the Indian situation methods of mass agitation and even terrorism borrowed from the West.

1. Report of the twenty-first Indian National Congress, 1905, p.13.
2. Morley to Minto, 2 August 1906.

As early as 1893-94, in a series of articles published in the Indu Prakash, entitled 'New Lamps for Old', [1] Aurobindo Ghose had made a scathing attack on the Indian National Congress. He had denounced the suppliant ways of the latter, accused its leaders of timidity, lack of vision and earnestness, and pronounced it to be an utter failure. This fierce academic onslaught was symptomatic of the rebellious feelings which were animating the younger generation. The latter soon found a leader in the formidable personality of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, with his emphasis on Hindu conservatism, mass appeal and direct action. The tide of Western liberalism began to recede in India by the end of the 19th century. Men searched for the moral basis of nationalism and found it in native history, religion and institutions. The past became glorified and transfigured. Old gods and heroes were invoked to drive away alien rulers. The young knew not about the century of anarchy that had preceded the establishment of British rule in India; they ridiculed the talk of their elders about the blessings of the Raj. 'New generations are rising up,' Gokhale remarked in the Imperial Legislative Council early in 1906, 'whose notions of the character and ideals of British rule are derived only from their experience of the last few years, and whose minds are not restrained by the thought of the great work which England has on the whole accomplished in the past in this land.'[2] The young were bitter against their elder

1. The articles are reproduced in Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, Sri Aurobindo's Political Thought, pp. 63-123.
2. Proceedings of the Council of the Governor-General of India, 1905-6, vol.XLIV, p.309.

leaders at their inability to wrest concessions from the Government, and against their rulers for their attitude of indifference and hostility towards the demands of moderate men. The carrying out of the partition of Bengal in 1905 in spite of determined local protests and appeals finally discredited the Congress methods of remonstrance and petition. The hopes aroused by the coming into power of a Liberal Government in England towards the end of 1905 were disappointed when Morley, the Secretary of State, declared partition to be 'a settled fact'[1] and remarked that the transplantation of English institutions in India was 'a fantastic and ludicrous dream'.[2] The need for more vigorous and self-reliant methods of agitation came to be widely felt.[3] It was encouraged by the spirit of the times. The victory of Japan over Russia had sent a wave of enthusiasm running throughout the East. Those who watched the revolutionary rumblings in Russia, the rise of the Sinn Fein movement in Ireland, the Egyptian struggle for freedom, the Young Turk revolt, and the grant of a constitution in Persia could not but be filled with newborn aspirations for their country and prompted to more energetic action.

The Extremists

The rebels within the Congress styled themselves the 'New Party' to distinguish themselves from the old organisa-

1. 152 H.C.Deb.4s., col.844.
2. 161 H.C.Deb.4s., col.587.
3. On this point see C.J.O'Donnell, The Causes of Present Discontents in India, pp.6-7, 30. It is significant that dissatisfaction at the behaviour of the Liberal Party encouraged extra-constitutional agitation in both India and Ireland.

tion. They called themselves 'Nationalists' as opposed to the old loyalist Congressmen. Their critics nicknamed them 'Extremists'. They began by denouncing the Congress method of agitation as futile and unbecoming. They called it 'mendicancy'. They dismissed the faith of older Congressmen in British justice and liberality as a delusion and a snare. Philanthropy, said Tilak, had no place in politics; and appeals to the good feelings of rulers were vain. The Congress had so far devoted itself to demanding isolated reforms and the removal of particular grievances. The Nationalists did not believe in these palliatives and tinkerings. They demanded a radical change in the system of government itself, 'the substitution for the autocratic bureaucracy of a free constitutional and democratic system of government', and 'the entire removal of foreign control in order to make way for perfect national liberty'.[1] The older Congressmen believed that the continuance of British rule was the indispensable condition of India's progress and prosperity. The Nationalists persuaded themselves to think that political freedom was the essential preliminary to all national progress. As Aurobindo put it: 'Political freedom is the life-breath of a nation; to attempt social reform, educational reform, industrial expansion, the moral improvement of the race without aiming first and foremost at political freedom, is the very height of ignorance and futility.'[2] The Nationalists were eager to foreshorten history.

1. Aurobindo, The Doctrine of Passive Resistance, p.16.
2. Ibid. p.3.

England had hitherto been the model for the politically-minded classes in India. Their teachers had been English books and English liberal advisers. They could not conceive of a truly popular and democratic government in India except by a process of gradual and slow evolution, of progress broadening from precedent to precedent. The Nationalists dismissed the English model as unsuited to India. How could the experience of an independent nation, they asked, be a valid guide to a subject people? They appealed instead to the revolutionary traditions of France, America, Italy and Ireland. Constitutional agitation, they said, in a country where there was no constitution and the people had no voice in the control of administration, was futile. Borrowing the methods of Irish Sinn Féin, they preached the need for organised passive resistance and self-reliance. The British Government in India, they believed, was based upon the help of the few and the acquiescence of the many. It was maya, a hypnotic illusion, which was to be destroyed. They hoped to make administration impossible by organised refusal to do anything which might help the rulers. They advocated the boycott of British goods, Government schools and colleges, law courts and executive authority in general. Along with this boycott, a campaign of self-development was to be attempted, aimed at the promotion of Swadeshi,[1] national arbitration courts, national education, and the organisation of public life independent of the Government - building up from the villages to a central national polity.

1. Indigenous goods.

For the time being their movement was to be confined to abstention from any cooperation with the Government, but if the latter did not pay any heed to their demands recourse was to be taken to such methods as the non-payment of taxes. They were to start with the principle of 'no control, no assistance', but when they had developed strength and a parallel government of their own, they could present an ultimatum to their alien rulers. The Nationalists hoped to achieve their objectives by peaceful and legal methods, but they did not rule out the possibility of resistance to unjust laws, or of taking recourse to force in self-defence, for after all, as they said, boycott was a war.

'Absolute Swaraj'

With such ideas and such a programme, it was but natural that the New Party should have fallen foul of the Congress ideal of self-government on the Colonial model. Aurobindo wrote: 'The Congress has contented itself with demanding self-government as it exists in the Colonies. We of the new school would not pitch our ideal one inch lower than absolute Swaraj - self-government as it exists in the United Kingdom. We believe that no smaller ideal can inspire national revival or nerve the people of India for the fierce, stubborn and formidable struggle by which alone they can again become a nation. We believe that this newly awakened people when it has gathered its strength together, neither can nor ought to consent to any relations with England less than that of equals in a confederacy. To be content with the relations of master

and dependent or superior and subordinate, would be a mean and pitiful aspiration unworthy of manhood, to strive for anything less than a strong and glorious freedom would be to insult the greatness of our past and the magnificent possibilities of our future.'[1] It is noteworthy that Aurobindo and his associates were not against friendly relations with Great Britain on equal terms. In fact, the new religion of patriotism which they preached was permeated with a vague universal ideal of the ultimate unity of mankind. But they insisted that the nation must first realise its destiny to the full, unhampered in the least degree by foreign control. If India was to retain her individuality, said Aurobindo, as a political and cultural unit and fulfil her mission in the world, she could not do so 'over-shadowed by a foreign power and foreign civilisation'. 'The world,' he wrote,'needs India and needs her free.....She must live her own life and not the life of a part or subordinate in a foreign Empire.'[2] To Aurobindo the ideal of Colonial self-government for India was 'a negation of patriotism' and a 'political monstrosity'; he instead propagated the ideal of 'absolute autonomy' and 'unqualified Swaraj'.[3]

Aurobindo's political associate, B.C.Pal, discussed at length the impossibility and impracticability of 'self-government under British supremacy' in his famous speeches

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1. Aurobindo, The Doctrine of Passive Resistance, pp. 69-70.
2. H. and U. Mukherjee, Bande Mataram and Indian Nationalism, pp. 85-6.
3. H. and U. Mukherjee, Sri Aurobindo's Political Thought, pp. 175, 181.

at Madras in May 1907.[1] If England controlled Indian foreign policy, he said, she could not do so without controlling India's armed forces and this would entail control of the purse, which would be a negation of India's right of self-taxation and self-administration. The argument that England protected her Colonies without demanding the expenses thereof and could treat India similarly was, in his view, invalid, for the Colonies stood on a different footing. They were white and peopled with the kith and kin of Englishmen. They received England's surplus population and her help in developing their resources. England was interested in their safety and well-being both for their sakes and her own. What England did for her Colonies, Pal argued, she would not do for India. He then tried to prove how self-government within the Empire would either be no self-government for India or no real overlordship for England. Indians would not be satisfied with 'a show of self-government' nor would England be satisfied with 'a shadowy overlordship'. If India got self-government like the Colonies, he said, she would impose protective tariffs in order to encourage her industries, and do away with the privileges enjoyed by British capital in the country at present, and this could never be tolerated by England. Further, if a country as big and populous as India obtained self-government 'the British Empire would cease to be British', for India would soon become 'the predominant partner in this Imperial firm'. Pal believed, therefore, that England would herself

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1. B.C.Pal, Swadeshi and Swaraj, pp.161-7.

prefer to have India as an ally, like Japan, rather than as a partner.

In this frank and open repudiation of the ideal of Colonial self-government, however, the Bengali Extremists, led by Aurobindo Ghose and B.C.Pal, stood alone. The acknowledged leader of the New Party, Tilak, and his group of Maharashtrian Nationalists, did not avow such sentiments. Tilak, for all his militant and active politics, was a great realist. He wrote in his paper early in 1907 that self-government on the Colonial model sufficed for him as an ideal to work for.[1] His difference with the Moderates, he repeatedly emphasised, was not with regard to the objective but only with regard to the methods of agitation to be adopted.[2] The young, impatient idealists of Bengal, who looked up to Tilak as 'the one possible leader for a revolutionary party',[3] were disappointed to discover in their hero an old-world politician, cautious and conservative, who would not inscribe an academic and dangerous ideal on his banner.

The Schism in the Congress

The rapid growth of the New Party alarmed the Moderate leaders of the Congress. Already in the summer of 1906 Gokhale had been assured by Morley that the British Government were in earnest to make an effective move in the way of 'reasonable reforms' in India and warned that the surest way

1. Cited by Gokhale, Speeches, p.950. See also S.V.Bapat, Reminiscences of Lokamanya Tilak, p.8.
2. H.W.Nevinson, The New Spirit in India, pp.72,75.
3. H.& U.Mukherjee, Sri Aurobindo's Political Thought, p.37.

to spoil their chances was the 'perversity and unreason' of his friends and their 'clamour for the impossible'.[1] Would the old leaders of the Congress throw overboard their rebellious followers and thus save the Congress and the reforms? The Times in a special article on 16 October 1906 frankly recommended such a course of action. It suggested to the Moderates 'a public repudiation' of the Extremists both as a matter of public honesty, for men holding such divergent views as Gokhale and Tilak should not continue the pretence of working together, and in order to strengthen their own position. 'If the idea of separation from England were explicitly disavowed and condemned' and the Extremists formally repudiated, the writer of the special article in The Times said, the Congress would secure the support of Englishmen and Muslims who sympathised with its aspirations for moderate progress; it would be able to exert greater influence upon public affairs and 'the bulk of the other reforms demanded by the Congress would probably be realized'.[2] The Moderates still hesitated to take such a course. They were anxious to avoid an open split in the Congress and thereby weaken it. Nor were they without hope to win over the Extremists by means of persuasion. In order to counteract the election of Tilak as president of the Congress, for which the Bengali Extremists were working and which would have been a signal that the Congress had been captured by the irreconcilables, the Moderate leaders

1. Morley to Minto, 27 July, 2 August 1906.
2. 'Divided Counsels in the Congress', The Times, 16 October 1906.

persuaded Dadabhai Naoroji to come over from England to preside over the 1906 session to be held at Calcutta. The great personal influence of the Grand Old Man of India sufficed to maintain the unity of the Congress for some time, but it was not without making large concessions to the wishes of the New Party.

There was a curious mingling of old ways and new at the 1906 session of the Congress. Naoroji proclaimed the Congress ideal to be 'self-government or Swaraj like that of the United Kingdom or the Colonies'. The ideal of Swaraj emerged as the one main and comprehensive objective. Naoroji demanded it as the birthright of Indians, but their birthright as British citizens. 'We are British citizens,' he remarked, 'and are entitled to and claim all British citizen's rights.' 'This birthright to be 'free' or to have freedom,' he added, 'is our right from the very beginning of our connection with England when we came under the British flag. When Bombay was acquired as the very first territorial possession, the government of the day in the very first grant of territorial rights to the East India Company declared thus: 'And it is declared that all persons being His Majesty's subjects inhabiting within the said Island and their children and their posterity born within the limits thereof shall be deemed free denizens and natural subjects as if living and born in England.' [1] This declaration of the rights of Indians as British citizens,

1. Extract from the Grant to the First East India Company of the Island of Bombay, dated 24 March 1669.

Naoroji claimed, had been reinforced by latter-day pledges, chief amongst which being the Queen's proclamation of 1858: 'We hold ourselves bound to the Natives of our Indian Territories by the same obligations of duty which bind us to our other subjects.....'[1] Naoroji, like Arthur Griffith in Ireland, who took his stand on the Renunciatory Act of 1783, was basing his claim on a document which had no legal validity.[2] But what is significant is the fact that both claimed a British constitutional right instead of appealing to the French revolutionary doctrine of the inherent and inalienable right of all men to be free.

By a formal resolution the Calcutta Congress expressed its opinion 'that the system of government obtaining in the self-governing Colonies should be extended to India' and urged the immediate adoption of certain reforms as 'steps leading to it'.[3]

Soon after the Calcutta session of the Congress

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1. Report of the twenty-second Indian National Congress, 1906, pp. 17-8, 21.
2. The cruel comment of The Times on Naoroji's speech was: 'Mr. Naoroji contends that, because the inhabitants of India are British citizens, they are entitled to all the political rights, privileges, as the inhabitants of England enjoy.....But the contention has no more root in history or in law than it has in common sense. We have won India by the sword, and in the last resort hold it by the sword.' The Times, 2 January 1907.
3. Report of the twenty-second Indian National Congress, 1906, pp.ii-iii. The reforms demanded were: simultaneous examinations for higher services in England and in India; adequate representation of Indians in the council of the S.O.S. and in the executive councils of the Viceroy and the Governors; expansion of the legislative councils, increased representation of Indians thereon and larger control over finance and administration; and liberalisation and extension of local self-government.

Gokhale undertook a tour of northern India in order to combat the influence of the dangerous doctrines preached by the New Party. In a speech at Allahabad on 4 February 1907,[1] he stated fully and frankly the creed of Moderate Congressmen. He recognised, he said on the occasion, no limits to his aspiration for his motherland. He wanted his people to rise to the full stature of their manhood and be in their country what other people were in theirs. He aspired to see his country take her proper place among the great nations of the world. But he felt convinced that the whole of this aspiration, in its essence and in its reality, could be realised within the Empire. 'The cases of the French in Canada and the Boers in South Africa,' Gokhale remarked, 'showed that there was room in the Empire for a self-respecting India.' It was not a question, Gokhale said, 'of what was theoretically perfect, but of what was practically attainable'. While working for the achievement of self-government within the Empire, they were trying to advance along lines which were well understood and which involved 'a minimum disturbance of existing ideas'. They would have in such an advance the sympathy and support of much that was high-minded, freedom-loving and honourable in England. With a remarkably true insight into English history and character, Gokhale asserted that, despite occasional lapses and reactions, 'the genius of the British people, as revealed in history, on the whole, made for political freedom, for constitutional liberty', and

1. Gokhale, op.cit. pp.949-57.

that it would be folly and madness on the part of Indians to throw away in the struggle that lay before them this great asset. He deprecated the cry that constitutional agitation had failed while they had not yet exhausted a thousandth part of its possibilities. While he recognised that nine-tenths of their work had to be done by them in India, Gokhale insisted on keeping in touch with British democracy, for the latter could be of valuable assistance to them in checking official retrogression and promoting nation-building. Gokhale condemned the doctrine of passive resistance and all-round boycott preached by the New Party not only because he thought it to be impracticable and injurious, but because he saw in it an 'attempt to shift the foundations of their public life'. He pointed out that nation-building was nowhere an easy task, and that in India it was beset with difficulties which were truly formidable. He warned his countrymen of the long and weary struggle that lay before them and of the dangers of undue impatience. Gokhale concluded on a note, which, for all its wisdom and sincerity, showed that the Moderates were fighting a losing battle. 'Let us not forget,' he said, 'that we are at a stage of the country's progress when our achievements are bound to be small, and our disappointments frequent and trying.....It will, no doubt, be given to our countrymen of future generations to serve India by their successes; we of the present generation must be content to serve her mainly by our failures.'

But the young were impatient, heedless of obstacles

and careless as to methods. They were no longer in a mood to serve India by their failures. Some of the false measures of repression adopted by the Government played into their hands. Their attacks upon the Moderate leaders and the authorities grew increasingly more bitter and strident. The Moderates judged correctly that the Extremist heresy was not yet widespread. Wisely enough, they decided either to coerce the Extremists into submission or eject them out of the Congress. They shifted the venue of the forthcoming session of Congress in December 1907 from Nagpur, where it was likely to be flooded with the followers of Tilak, to Surat, which was Pherozeshah Mehta's pocket borough. They managed to get elected a Moderate Bengali, Dr. Rashbehary Ghose, as the president of the session. And finally, to force a few Bengali Extremists, who had openly preached the doctrines of complete independence and all-round boycott, out of the Congress, they decided to impose a new constitution on the organisation which required every delegate to the Congress session to subscribe to the Congress ideal of 'self-government similar to that enjoyed by the self-governing members of the British Empire', to be attained 'by strictly constitutional means'.[1]

Amidst all the dust and the din of the controversy about the Surat split - the clash of personalities, the charges and countercharges of irregularities and backslidings, of obduracy and responsibility for hurling the 'Mahratta shoe' - it is easy to discern two points of cardinal import-

1. T.V.Parvate, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, p.178.

ance that divided the two sections in the Congress. Some of the Bengali Extremists, led by Aurobindo Ghose, already stood committed to the ideal of absolute autonomy and complete self-government. The attempt to confine the membership of the Congress only to those who definitely and openly subscribed to the ideal of self-government within the Empire was interpreted by them as a clever move designed to eliminate them from the organisation. The second major difference was about the methods. The Congress at its Calcutta session in 1906 had given its approval to the campaign for the boycott of British goods as a temporary measure intended to put pressure on the British Government and draw their attention to the grievance about the partition of Bengal. The Nationalists interpreted boycott in the widest possible sense. To them it was complete Irish Sinn Fein - boycott not only of British goods, but of everything connected with British administration. To yield to the Nationalists on these two points - the creed and the methods - would have meant handing over the Congress to them. If the Congress was to remain a loyal, moderate and respectable organisation, it could not shelter under its wings those who stood for 'absolute Swaraj' outside the Empire, and preached non-cooperation with the Government. The Congress had so far endeavoured to work for national advance in association with the British rulers. It was convinced that there was no other alternative to the British Raj in India, except chaos. Though disappointed of the bureaucracy, it stll retained its faith in British democracy. The Moderates felt that

the Extremists were not only challenging the very bases of older thought and belief, but endangering national progress itself. They decided, therefore, either to bridle the Extremists, or, if they proved recalcitrant, to disown them. The young Bengali Extremists, headed by Aurobindo, decided to wreck the organisation instead of being driven out of it.[1] The result was the Surat episode.

The Congress, however, did not dissolve in chaos at Surat. Soon after the disorderly scenes of the second day of the session, 27 December 1907, the older Moderate leaders of the Congress, P.Mehta, D.E.Wacha, G.K.Gokhale, R.B.Ghose, M.M.Malaviya and others, met in private and drew up a notice calling a National Convention to meet the next day, 28 December, of all those delegates who subscribed to the ideal of self-government for India on the Colonial model and its attainment by strictly constitutional means. Over 900 delegates, out of the 1600 who had come to Surat, attended the Convention which appointed a committee to draw up a constitution for the Congress.[2] This Convention Committee met at Allahabad on 18 and 19 April 1908 and framed a constitution for the Congress, as also a set of rules for the conduct of its meetings. Article I of the constitution enunciated the creed of the Congress. It read: 'The objects of the Indian National Congress are the attainment by the people of India of a system of government similar to that enjoyed by the self-

1. Aurobindo, On Himself and on the Mother, pp.79-82.
2. Report of the twenty-third Indian National Congress, 1908, p. 17.

governing members of the British Empire, and a participation by them in the rights and responsibilities of the Empire on equal terms with those members. These objects are to be achieved by constitutional means, by bringing about a steady reform of the existing system of administration, and by promoting national unity, fostering public spirit, and developing and organising the intellectual, moral, economic and industrial resources of the country.' Article II required every delegate to the Congress to express in writing his acceptance of this creed.[1]

The Bande Mataram, the organ of the Bengali Extremists, in its issue of 23 April 1908, denounced the Convention for having betrayed 'the mandate of their country and the future of their people'. Its leaders were condemned as 'advocates of contradiction', 'servants of the alien bureaucrat disguised as patriots','foes of Indian independence', timid men who had 'refused to serve the Mother with an undivided heart' and 'placed the alien on the throne of her future and dared to think that she would accept a left hand and inferior chair at the side of his seat of empire'.[2] Again on 3 May it pronounced against the ideal adopted by the Convention as a denial of India's birthright, her individuality, her past and her independent future, an attempt to maintain India in 'the position of a subordinate satellite in a foreign system', and added: 'Between Conventionalism and Nationalism there can

1. Report of the twenty-third Indian National Congress, 1908, p.xix.
2. H.and U. Mukherjee, Bande Mataram and Indian Nationalism, pp. 77-80.

henceforward be no truce. It is war to the knife until one or the other succumbs.'[1] But before this war to the knife could begin the Government had made short work of the handful of fire-eaters.

The British Response

Morley was the Secretary of State and Minto the Viceroy when the first great wave of political unrest swept over India during the years 1905 -10. The Secretary of State and the Viceroy differed widely in their political training, experience and general outlook. And as was to be expected these differences often found reflection in their views regarding the manner in which the Indian problem should be tackled. Minto recognised that a new spirit was abroad in India, but he proposed to meet it by encouraging the more conservative and loyal elements in Indian society as 'a possible counterpoise to Congress aims'.[2] Being the man on the spot and pressed by immediate anxieties, he was naturally more inclined to emphasise the subversive and disloyal character of the Congress movement. He often complained to Morley that the Congress agitation received mistaken sympathy and exaggerated importance at home and was aided by questions in the House of Commons. He considered the House of Commons to be 'perhaps the greatest danger to the continuance of our rule in the country'.[3] Minto was a man with a wide outlook and fairly liberal sympathies, but he was too often tempted to emphasise

1. Ibid. pp.80-88.
2. Minto to Morley, 28 May 1906.
3. Minto to Morley, 28 May 1908.

the virtues of the strong hand, for he was convinced that India was held by the sword. He even demanded that the Government of India should be 'given a free hand to rule the country'.[1] Minto, however, did not fail to realise that the growth of education and political consciousness had created aspirations in India which it was difficult to ignore, and the urgent necessity of associating Indians with 'an administration which our military strength alone guarantees'.[2] In this he was far in advance of the general official opinion in India.

Morley was nearing his seventieth year when he came to the India Office. He was, to quote his own words, 'as cautious a Whig as any Elliott, Russell or Grey, that was ever born',[3] and he had 'no ambition to take part in any grand revolution',[4] during his time of responsibility. He was, however, determined to adjust the machinery of Indian Government to the changed circumstances in India and growing democratic opinion at home. His liberal sympathies and his wide experience and study of European national and revolutionary movements gave him a better insight into the Indian problem. In Morley's view it was not the democracy in England, but the cast-iron bureaucracy in India, with its outmoded ideas and methods, which was the real menace to the Empire. With the object-lesson of the Russian revolution before him, he was unrelenting in his belief that the British Demos must keep a strict

1. Ibid.
2. Minto to Morley, 29 May 1907.
3. Morley to Minto, 30 November 1906.
4. Morley to Minto, 6 June 1906.

watch over the 'Tchinovniks'[1] in India.[2] He also hoped that the reformed legislative councils in India would serve the latter as a whetstone. Morley was convinced that conciliation not repression was the right policy. 'Reforms,' he wrote to Minto, 'may not save the Raj, but if they don't, nothing else will.'[3] The fundamental difference between the outlook of a liberal statesman and that of a soldier-administrator is nowhere so clearly revealed than in the reply which Minto made to the above remark. 'You say,' Minto wrote back, 'that the reforms may not 'save the Raj'; they certainly will not, though if they are thoughtfully introduced they may help to render its administration happy. But when you say that 'if the reforms do not save the Raj, nothing else will' I am afraid I must disagree. The Raj will not disappear in India so long as the British race remains what it is, because we shall fight for the Raj as hard as we have ever fought, if it comes to fighting, and we shall win as we have always won.'[4]

The Morley-Minto Reforms

But with all their differences, Morley and Minto were agreed on certain essentials of Indian policy. They were both convinced that the safety and welfare of India depended on the permanence of the British administration; the Government

1. This was Morley's favourite appellation for the civil servants.
2. Morley set forth his views in detail on this subject after relinquishing charge of the India Office. See 'British Democracy and Indian Government', The Nineteenth Century and After, February 1911, pp.189-209.
3. Morley to Minto, 7 May 1908.
4. Minto to Morley, 28 May 1908.

of India was always to remain autocratic; the sovereignty must be vested in British hands and could not be delegated to any kind of representative assembly. Besides being incompatible with British supremacy, representative government was, in their view, wholly unsuited to Indian conditions; the only representation for which the country was fitted was one by classes and communities, and that, too, to a very limited extent. What they aimed at was, in the main, a 'scheme of administrative improvement',[1] designed to win over the moderates in India and with their help to 'strengthen English government, and place it in a better position both for doing its work and for defending what it does'.[2] The Government of India stood exposed, isolated and ignorant. As Morley put it: 'We don't know the minds of the Natives, and the Natives don't know what is in our minds. How to find some sort of a bridge? That's the question.'[3] Their reforms were intended to provide this bridge.

The two main features of the Morley-Minto reforms were: 1) the admission of two Indians to the council of the Secretary of State and one Indian each to the executive councils of the Governor-General and the Governors; and 2) the expansion and liberalisation of the legislative councils. The first was a gesture intended to give concrete proof that the Government meant honestly to fulfil the promises contained

1. Morley to Minto, 26 March 1908.
2. Morley to Minto, 5 November 1908.
3. Morley to Minto, 16 May 1907.

in the Charter Act of 1833 and the Queen's proclamation of 1858, that race was to be no disqualification to the high offices in the state. The appointment of an Indian to the executive council of the Governor-General proved to be an extremely controversial issue. Morley and Minto were convinced of the utility of the step. The former considered it to be 'the cheapest concession'[1] that could be made, for it would leave the British executive authority unimpaired, which was in his view the cardinal requirement of any reforming operations to be undertaken. The Viceroy thought that it would be 'by far the best answer to Congress agitation'.[2] Morley remarked: 'He (the Indian member) would tell you how things strike that queer article the Native mind.'[3] And Minto expressed approval saying: 'This is exactly the information we want.'[4] A veritable storm, however, raged for about two years over the question. Every member of Minto's executive council, except one, was opposed to the proposal. Morley's council was equally hostile. The local governments in India expressed disapproval. The ex-Viceroys, Curzon, Lansdowne, Elgin, and even Ripon, pronounced against it. The English press was universally opposed. Most Conservatives frankly detested the suggestion and even many Liberals were dubious. The Prince of Wales did not conceal his dislike and the King-Emperor administered an earnest remonstrance. The British community in India talked of organising for self-

1. Morley to Minto, 15 November 1906.
2. Minto to Morley, 28 October 1906.
3. Morley to Minto, 14 March 1907.
4. Minto to Morley, 2 April 1907.

defence. Morley and Minto feared a recrudescence of the clamour of the Ilbert Bill days and at times well-nigh decided to abandon the idea. Morley admitted that had parliamentary legislation been necessary for the appointment, the Lords would have thrown out the bill.[1] The Lords took their revenge none the less by vetoing a clause in the Indian Councils Bill of 1909 providing for executive councils to the Lieutenant-Governors. All this may give us some idea of the forces against which the Secretary of State and the Viceroy had to contend.

The Indian Councils Act of 1909 was in the main an extension of the Act of 1892. It doubled the number of Indians in the provincial legislative councils and gave the latter non-official (nominated + elected) majorities.[2] The Imperial Legislative Council also received an addition of Indian members, but here an official majority was retained.[3] The principle of election, implicit in the Act of 1892, was now frankly recognised. The legislative councils were allowed more time to discuss the budget, to move resolutions and to call for a division. The right of interpellation was extended and members could ask supplementary questions. Morley and Minto,

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1. Morley to Minto, 4 February 1909.
2. The number of additional members was increased to a maximum of 50 in the larger and 30 in the smaller provinces. In Bombay, for example, of the total membership of 47, 5 were ex-officio members, 21 were nominated (of which not more than 14 could be officials, and 21 were elected. In Bengal alone there was a clear elected majority, but here the European representatives held the balance.
3. Out of the total membership of 68, there were 36 officials and 32 non-officials; 41 seats were filled by nomination and 27 by election.

however, stoutly repudiated the suggestion that these enlarged legislative councils were intended to pave the way for anything resembling parliamentary institutions in India.[1] The councils being already in existence, they attempted to make representation thereon more real and living with a view to making them better vehicles of expressing the opinions of the differing classes and communities in India. The liberalisation of their procedure was intended to afford the Government 'additional opportunities both of becoming acquainted with the drift of public opinion and of explaining their own actions'.[2] Indians were to be more closely associated with the tasks of legislation and administration, they were to be given better opportunities of influencing the Government, but they were not yet to govern themselves or to be trained for doing so. The two-fold purpose of the legislative reforms was emphasised by Morley in his final despatch to Minto on 27 November 1908. It was 'to enable Government the better to realise the wants, the sentiments, of the governed, and on the other hand to give the governed a better chance of understanding, as occasion arises, the case for the Government against the

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1. Morley's oft-quoted remark: 'If it could be said that this chapter of reforms led directly or necessarily up to the establishment of a parliamentary system in India, I, for one, would have nothing to do with it.....If my existence, either officially or corporally, were prolonged twenty times longer than either of them is likely to be, a parliamentary system in India is not the goal to which I for one moment would aspire.' 198 H.L.Deb. 4s., col.1985. Minto was equally emphatic: 'We have aimed at the reform and enlargement of our councils, but not at the creation of parliaments.' Proceedings of the Imperial Legislative Council, 1909-10, vol.xlviii, pp.50-51.
2. Cd. 4426, p.47.

misrepresentations of ignorance and malice'.[1] The elections to the legislative councils were indirect,[2] except in the case of the Muslims and the landlords; the electorate was indefinite and severely restricted.[3] The non-official majorities in the provincial legislative councils were unreal, and an attempt was made to counteract the influence of the advanced political classes by special electorates created and weighted in favour of the Muslims and the landed gentry.

The Future

Morley and Minto often gave expression to their vague disquiet about the future of the British Raj in India. 'The question is the Future,'[4] they repeatedly told each other, without indicating how it was to be met. In fact, the question was posed only to be dismissed as unreal. 'I lay down as an 'axiom',' wrote Minto in June 1909, 'that our considerations as to the future must be based on the recognition of our bounden duty to secure British administration in India and the welfare of the population over whom we rule. As far as we can look ahead the existence of India must depend upon British

1. Ibid. p.50.
2. The constituencies for the Imperial Legislative Council were the provincial legislative councils, landholders, Muslims and Chambers of commerce. For the provincial legislative councils, the electors were municipal and district boards, landholders, planters, universities, Muslims, and the trading community.
3. There were, for example, 4818 electors for the 27 elective seats on the Imperial Legislative Council. Of these 2406 were directly landlords and 1901 Muslims. 13 of the 27 elected members were elected by the non-official members of the provincial legislative councils, 6 by landlords, 6 by Muslims, and 2 by the chambers of commerce. 8 electors chose the Muslim representative from Bombay. 9 electors chose the representative from Burma, 14 the one from the C.P. and 15 from the Punjab. Cd. 141, pp.81-2.
4. Morley to Minto, 3 May 1907.

supremacy.'[1] Proceeding on this 'axiom', it was but natural that the authors of the 1909 reforms should have refused to give serious thought to the pregnant question, 'Whither?'. They dismissed the ideal of self-government for India like the Dominions, entertained by the vast majority of Indian nationalists at the time, as 'a mere dream'[2] and 'an impossibility'[3]. They could not conceive of the Government of India as anything but a benevolent despotism or a constitutional autocracy. Morley was all in favour of infusing the spirit of English institutions into the Government of India and of making the latter as just, constitutional and legal as possible, but he did not think 'desirable or possible, or even conceivable, to adapt English political institutions to the nations who inhabit India'.[4] He repeatedly denounced the suggestion to do so as a 'gross and dangerous sophism'.[5] Minto considered the increased representation of Indians on the legislative councils to be 'a sop to impossible ambitions'.[6] Morley and Minto did not concern themselves with the distant scene. All that they attempted to do was to 'hatch some plan and policy for half a generation'[7] or so. Morley wrote to Minto: 'Do you know something said by Deak, the Hungarian statesman? 'I can

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1. Minto to Morley, 17 June 1909.
2. Morley to Minto, 2 August 1906.
3. Minto to Morley, 13 May 1909.
4. Morley to Minto, 6 June 1906.
5. Morley, Indian Speeches, p.36.
6. Minto to Morley, 16 May 1907.
7. 'If we can hatch some plan and policy for half a generation that will be something; and if for a whole generation, that would be better. Only I am bent, as you assuredly are, on doing nothing to loosen the bolts.' Morley to Minto, 17 April 1907.

answer for to-day, I can pretty well for tomorrow, the day after tomorrow I leave to Providence.' So do I.'[1] Minto was in no mood 'to speculate on the problems of coming generations'.[2] Parliament was equally disinclined to lift the veil of the future.[3] But 'the day after tomorrow' came sooner than expected, hastened by the reforms themselves and the war, and those who had to attend to its tasks accused the authors of the 1909 reforms of lack of faith and foresight.

The Congress and the Morley-Minto Reforms

Early in 1906 Morley had warned Gokhale, the leader of the moderate section of the Congress, that if he and his friends attempted to belittle the reforms he contemplated to inaugurate, its only effect would be 'to set the clock back'.[4] Gokhale and his friends tried their best to create an atmosphere favourable to the reception of the reforms in India and in the attempt even split the Congress. When the reform proposals were announced towards the end of 1908, the moderates deliberately avoided voicing their dissatisfaction with them. They did so for two main reasons: first, because they knew

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1. Morley to Minto, 15 July 1909.
2. Minto to Morley, 17 June 1909. Also, 'But what will the next great change be, and when? Not in our time.' Minto to Morley, 25 February 1909.
3. Lord Crewe spoke for most of his contemporaries when he remarked in the House of Lords on 24 February 1909: 'What will be the future of India fifty, sixty, or a hundred years hence need not, I think, trouble us. It is on the knees of the gods, and all we have to do is to provide, as best we can, for the conditions of the moment, having, of course, an eye to the future, but not troubling ourselves about what may happen in days when to use Sheridan's words - 'all of us are dead and most of us are forgotten'.' 1 H.L.Deb. 5s., col.215.
4. Morley to Minto, 27 July, 2 August 1906.

that in Morley they had their best possible friend whom it would be impolitic to annoy; and, second, because they feared that any criticism of the reform proposals would give encouragement to the extremist agitation in India. Old friends of the Congress in England, men like Hume and Wedderburn, also advised acceptance with gratitude. The Congress at its annual session in December 1908 considered the proposals contained in Morley's final despatch of November last to be 'a large and liberal instalment of reforms' and expressed 'its most sincere and grateful thanks' to the Viceroy and the Secretary of State.[1] This atmosphere of gratitude and satisfaction gave way to disappointment and grief when the rules and regulations framed under the Act were announced towards the end of 1909. The Congress condemned the separate electorates created for the Muslims as designed to aggravate communal differences. It considered the franchise to be illiberal and rooted in the distrust of the educated classes. It regretted that the non-official majorities in the provincial legislative councils had been rendered illusory by the system of nomination, that provinces like the Punjab and the U.P. had been denied executive councils, and that the Central Provinces had not been given even a legislative council. But, while disapproving of these illiberal regulations and urging modifications, the Congress gratefully accepted the Act of 1909 as 'a fairly liberal measure'. Strange though it might

1. Report of the twenty-third Indian National Congress, 1908, pp.1-2.
2. Report of the twenty-fourth Indian National Congress, 1909, pp. 1-2.

appear, Indian nationalists welcomed the reforms for the very reason which Morley and Minto had so emphatically and repeatedly disavowed. They interpreted them as an advance towards parliamentary government. Gokhale remarked that Indians had been engaged hitherto in agitating from outside, the reforms offered them an opportunity for responsible association with the administration. It was not still, he said, control over administration, or any large share of administration, but the reforms opened prospects of ultimate responsible administration. Undaunted by official disclaimers, he asserted confidently: 'From agitation to responsible association and from responsible association - a long and weary step - but the step will have to come, to responsible administration.'[1]

Reforms Without Plan or Policy

'How a parliamentary democracy is to govern India?'[2] 'How are we to maintain our rule here in the face of an ever-increasing educated class and ever-increasing ambitions?'[3] These were the questions that Morley and Minto posed before themselves and attempted to answer for their day. They advanced cautiously and prudently a few steps further on the well-tried road traversed since 1861. It is difficult to disagree with Morley's verdict that his reforms were the best possible under the circumstances.[4] Anything more ambitious would not have passed the Lords. The chief criticism of the reforms of 1909 would not be that they were illiberal or

1. Report of the twenty-third Indian National Congress, 1908, p. 137.
2. Morley to Minto, 8 October 1907.
3. Minto to Morley, 16 May 1907.
4. Morley to Minto, 2 August 1907, 5 November 1909.

insufficient, but that 'lacking a clearly distinguishable and steadily developing British policy towards the growth of politics in India, Morley and Minto were driven to devising not so much a coherent plan as a series of expedients to meet the particular and admittedly difficult situation'.[1] 'Order plus Progress'[2] was an excellent maxim, but it could not be a substitute for a well-thought-out and far-seeing policy. In a certain sense Morley and Minto refused to face the basic question posed by Indian nationalism: 'What is the goal of British policy in India?' Perhaps, they thought that no new ideal was needed and that what had satisfied Burke, Macaulay and Mill would be sufficient unto their day and even beyond it. While ready to recognise the genuine wish of educated Indians for an increased share in the administration of their country, Minto still thought it was 'not so much political reform or political ambitions that, in the present stage of Indian history, I feel we ought to look to, but the means of giving most happiness and prosperity to the every-day lives of its teeming multitudes'.[3] The Secretary of State and the Viceroy did not fail to recognise that modern Western ideas were at work in India, that a new spirit was abroad, and that differences of class and creed were being slowly obliterated by the new-born spirit of nationalism,[4] but they felt that Indians

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1. C.H.Philips, India, p.107.
2. Morley to Minto, 3 October 1907.
3. Minto to Morley, 4 November 1906.
4. 'There is one point which people do not understand at home, and which has only in quite recent years become recognisable, viz., the disappearance of religious and race antipathies in view of the possibility of a united nationality.' Minto to Morley, 16 May 1907.

would have to take countless weary steps before a great mass could acquire a true political personality. Without worrying themselves overmuch with that distant contingency, Morley and Minto applied themselves to 'the duty of the day' and 'the tasks of tomorrow'.[1] About the central purpose of British rule in India Morley at least had no doubt. It was 'to implant - slowly, prudently, judiciously - those ideas of justice, law, humanity, which are the foundation of our own civilisation'.[2] The 'mighty Raj', Morley knew, was 'intensely artificial and unnatural' and surely could not last; and his task, as he conceived it, was 'to make the next transition, whatever it may turn out to be, something of an improvement'.[3] He would have nothing to do with either of 'the two stupid ideas, that we have nothing to do but to keep the sword sharp, or on the other hand that we have nothing to do but to concede One Man One Vote'.[4] 'The only chance,' he wrote to Minto, 'be it a good chance or a bad, is to do our best to make English rulers friends with Indian leaders, and at the same time do our best to train them in habits of political responsibility.'[5] The complex and inscrutable problem of India did

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1. Morley, Indian Speeches, p.33.
2. 'And what are we in India for? Surely to implant..... ' Morley to Minto, 7 October 1908.
3. '.....how intensely artificial and unnatural is our mighty Raj, and it sets one wondering whether it can possibly last. It surely cannot, and our only business is to do what we can to make .....' Morley to Minto, 15 August 1907.
4. Morley to Minto, 3 October 1907.
5. 'One Liberal experiment may fail. The Tory experiment of grudging and half-and-half concession is sure to fail; sure to end in dangerous impotence. The only chance.....' Morley to Minto, 2 April 1909.

not allow even a philosopher-statesman like Morley to look far ahead, but he did not fail to recognise the two main forces working for progress in India. More than a year after relinquishing charge of the India Office, Morley wrote that 'the prudently guarded expansion of popular government in India by the Councils Act, passed by Parliament in 1909' and 'the expansion of popular power, and the distribution of it as an organised force, in Parliament at home' - 'these two changes.... are evidently destined in the fulness of time, perhaps no very long time, to prove themselves changes of the first order in their effects upon Indian policy in all its most extensive bearings'.[1] All these sage reflections, however, could not make amends for the lack of a definite vision and a clear-cut, forward-looking policy.

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1. Morley, 'British Democracy and Indian Government'. The Nineteenth Century and After, February 1911, p.197.

CHAPTER II

INDIA: OLD WAYS AND NEW, 1910 - 17.

British Reactions to the Congress Ideal of Colonial Self-government.

A few radicals, belonging to the Liberal or the Labour Party in England, sympathised with the Congress ideal of self-government on the Colonial model and even encouraged it, but the more responsible Englishmen - both official and non-official - dismissed that ideal as inconceivable, impracticable, or dangerous. The vastness, diversity and backwardness of India, which made the introduction of self-governing institutions in that country so difficult; the lack of racial and sentimental ties between Indians and the British; the strong belief that constitutional principles could not be applied to a conquered dependency; and the fear that a self-governing India would at once 'cut the painter' - all militated against the idea of an Indian Dominion. We have already noted how Morley, the Liberal Secretary of State, was as sceptical in the matter as Minto, the Conservative Viceroy.[1] Alfred Milner remarked in 1908 that the idea of extending self-government to India like the Colonies, which seemed to have 'a fascination for some untutored minds', was 'a hopeless absurdity'.[2] Curzon called it 'a fantastic and futile dream' and objected to it 'in toto', for it was 'incompatible with the continuance of British rule in India'.[3] Valentine

1. See pp. 36, 62 above.
2. Milner, The Nation and the Empire, p.294.
3. Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute, 1908-9, vol.xl, p.382. See also Curzon, 'The True Imperialism', The Nineteenth Century and After, January 1908, p.163.

Chirol [1] wrote that there could never be between Englishmen and Indians 'the same community of historical traditions, of racial affinity, of social institutions, of customs and beliefs' that existed between people of their own stock throughout the British Empire. 'The absence of these sentimental bonds, which cannot be artificially forged,' Chirol added, 'makes it impossible that we should ever concede to India the rights of self-government which we have willingly conceded to the great British communities.' 'We must,' he insisted, 'continue to govern India as the greatest of the dependencies of the British Crown.'[2] In a note to the Government of India in Minto's viceroyalty, Reginald Craddock [3] pointed out the Congress demand of Colonial self-government was 'in effect a demand for complete independence'. Sentimental reasons, he wrote, which maintained the tie between the Dominions and the mother country were all lacking in the case of India. Nor would self-interest prompt India, as it prompted the Dominions, to remain within the Empire, for while the Dominions, with their few millions of inhabitants, could not alone resist powerful external enemies, India, with her 300 millions, 'would easily keep at bay a world in arms'.[4]

It was easy enough to point to the difficulties and dangers of granting self-government to India like the Domin-

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1. Famous journalist and author; specialist in Eastern affairs.
2. Chirol, Indian Unrest, pp.332-3.
3. The Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces at the time; later Home Member in the Government of India and Governor of Burma.
4. Craddock, The Dilemma in India, pp.287-8.

ions, but had these sceptics any alternative ideal? Could any responsible British statesman declare frankly, as Chirol had done, that Britain would never concede self-government to India and continue to hold her as a dependency for ever? In 1899 Theodore Morison had written that 'a statesman who ventured to advocate the .....policy that India should be kept in a state of perpetual vassalage .....would be hooted from public life'.[1] And it was certainly true. In 1909 Lord Courtney took some of his fellow peers to task for attempting to lay down the axiom that Colonial self-government could never, under any circumstances, come to pass in India. 'We have had,' Courtney remarked, 'government for the people in India. It is impossible to carry that on without proceeding to government through the people of India. By and by you will come more and more to government by the people.'[2] The noble Lords felt the rebuke and dared not challenge. But the general concensus of opinion even amongst the reformers in England was that there was 'no necessity to trouble much about the ultimate goal'.[3] Thus it happened that, true to their empirical nature, the statesmen of the Morley-Minto era, despite all their uneasiness about the future of British rule in India, either did not feel the necessity of or evaded formulating a clear and definite forward-looking policy. But once the Congress had inscribed the ideal of self-government within the Empire on its banner - however ambitious and impracticable it

1. Morison, Imperial Rule in India, p.1.
2. 1 H.L. Deb. 5s., col.l. 195-6.
3. Ibid. col.196.

might seem - it was both a political and a moral challenge which the British Government would some day have to answer. An attitude of negation or evasion could not be maintained indefinitely.

The Need for a Declaration of Policy:

Morley believed that the effect of his reforms had been, was being, and would be to persuade those who hoped for self-government of the Colonial species in India to give up their dreams and be content with being admitted to cooperation with the British administration.[1] It was nothing short of a make-believe. It is not possible for men to give up their dreams so easily. The eyes of most educated Indians were now fixed upon the future. The Congress had avoided committing itself to a definite ideal as long as it could help it. It was forced to do so mainly because a section of it had raised the far more ambitious and challenging cry of complete self-government and absolute autonomy. Nor could cooperation with the British administration be an end in itself. As was to be expected, Indian nationalists, instead of relinquishing their dream, began pressing the British Government to accept it as their own. In July 1911 Gokhale wrote that the political evolution to which Indian reformers looked forward was 'representative government on a democratic basis'. In his view 'the first requisite of improved relations on an enduring basis between Englishmen and Indians' was 'an unequivocal declaration on England's part of her resolve

1. 1 H.L. Deb. 5s, coll. 118-9.

to help forward the growth of representative institutions in India and a determination to stand by this policy, in spite of all temptations or difficulties'. 'I think the time has come,' wrote Gokhale, 'when a definite pronouncement on this subject should be made by the highest authority entitled to speak in the name of England, and the British Government in India should keep such pronouncement in view in all its actions.'[1]

Nor did Indian nationalists stand alone in demanding a definition of British policy in India. Indian unrest and the controversial character of the Morley-Minto reforms had set reflecting Englishmen thinking about the future and purpose of the British Raj. Men of religion were, perhaps, the first to respond to the challenge of Indian nationalism. In 1907 Rev. C.F.Andrews [2] pointed out that the only hope of rapprochement between Englishmen and Indians lay in the frank recognition by the British Government of the new national aspirations of Indians as reasonable and legitimate.[3] The Bishop of Southampton [4] enquired in January 1908 whether the English administrators in India ever cared to think where their work in India was leading to. 'Is India,' he asked, 'always to remain a subject country? Is that our

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1. Gokhale, 'East and West in India', The Hindustan Review, July 1911, p.9.
2. Of the Cambridge Mission in India; lecturer, St. Stephen's College, Delhi.
3. Andrews, 'The Ideal of Indian Nationality', The Hindustan Review, January 1907, pp.5-19. See also The Hindustan Review, December 1907 and The Modern Review, December 1907.
4. He had formerly been the Bishop of Bombay.

intention? Is that our desire and inward purpose? Is that our conception of our mission, or have we in our minds something better and nobler, something of more world-wide importance? Have we visions of an Indian nation as a far-off possibility, and are such visions the inspiration of our work? Do we feel that our duty to India and mankind can only be accomplished through the evolution of a united, free, intelligent, self-governing people, and that it cannot be accomplished through the indefinite continuance of foreign bureaucratic rule, however good and beneficent?' The Bishop argued that Englishmen and Indians were working at cross purposes because they did not have the same aim. He pleaded for a meeting of minds on the subject of the future goal and a definite acceptance by the British people of the Indian ideal of self-government.[1]

The enlightened English civil servant in India also felt the need of a definite, far-sighted policy. Lovat Fraser[2] noted in 1909: 'Many of our difficulties are due to the fact that we have never made up our minds as to our purpose there .....Reflecting civil servants have said to me: 'What are we here for? If I only knew that, I should know how to order my life and my duty.' The civilian nowadays is perplexed and puzzled. He sees the conflict of rival ideas - the one that we are in India for the good of the people, and the other

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1. The Bishop of Southampton, 'The Unrest in India and Some of Its Causes', The East and the West, January 1908, pp. 1-20.
2. Leader-writer of The Times; formerly editor of The Times of India.

that we are there for our own good.'[1] Lord Meston [2] disclosed later that the far-reaching and constantly-spreading spirit of nationalism in India made it impossible for the British officials in that country to carry on without a declared policy of what England meant to do in India and with India, and that it was largely in response to their appeals that the search for a policy was undertaken.[3]

The radicals in England demanded that the issue should be burked no longer. In July 1910 Josiah Wedgwood asked bluntly in the Commons: 'Do we actually want India some time to be free and self-governing or not?' He insisted that the British Government should make it clear whether they wanted India ultimately to be self-governing or not. If not, they should drop cant and say so. If, on the other hand, they did want her to be ultimately self-governing - 'whether it be in twenty, fifty or a hundred years' - they should tell that frankly to the Indian people and lay their plans accordingly. The best means of stopping sedition in India, Wedgwood added, was for the Government to indicate clearly the road that they intended to travel in order to enable India to be self-governing, so that Indians could see the milestones in front of them and know exactly how they were progressing towards their ideal.[4]

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1. 'Britain's Future in India', The Times, 28 June 1909; The History of The Times, vol.iv, pt.II, p.834.
2. James Scorgie Meston: I.C.S., 1883; Lt.Governor of the United Provinces, 1912-8; Baron, 1919.
3. 37 H.L. Deb.5s., col.1034; Ilbert and Meston, The New Constitution of India, pp.94-5.
4. 19 H.C. Deb.5s., coll.2043-44.

In 1911-12 there was an episode, which, though it brought forth renewed and more emphatic official disclaimers of the ideal of Colonial self-government for India, revealed that even the Government of India felt the need of looking ahead and at least one member of His Majesty's Government realised that a clear and authoritative enunciation of British policy in India was imperative. In their despatch of 25 August 1911 to the Secretary of State, the Government of India had pointed out that 'in the course of time, the just demands of Indians for a larger share in the Government of the country will have to be satisfied, and the question will be how this devolution of power can be conceded without impairing the supreme authority of the Governor-General in Council'. To the Government of India 'the only possible solution of the difficulty' appeared to be 'gradually to give the Provinces a larger measure of self-government, until at last India would consist of a number of administrations, autonomous in all provincial affairs, with the Government of India above them all and possessing power to interfere in cases of misgovernment, but ordinarily restricting their functions to matters of Imperial concern'.[1] The despatch was published on 12 December 1911 and was at once seized upon by Indian nationalists as indicating the aim and intention of British Government in India. During the debates in Parliament in February 1912 Curzon and Lansdowne accused the

1. Cd. 5979, p.7. The despatch was in connection with the proposed transfer of the capital of India from Calcutta to Delhi.

Liberal Government of contemplating the introduction of some sort of federal Home Rule in India.[1] The Secretary of State, Lord Crewe, assured the House that nothing of the kind was intended, and that Lord Hardinge had only casually spoken of 'the inevitable trend and tendency of things in India' towards further decentralisation in all matters of a provincial nature.[2] A week later, on 28 February, however, Edwin Montagu, the Under-Secretary of State for India, spoke at Cambridge in a totally different vein. He dwelt at length on the Liberal ideal of the Empire, based on freedom and free association. He remarked that Curzon as Viceroy was 'a mere administrator' who had no policy at all. He compared him to a chauffeur who spent his time polishing up the machinery, screwing every nut and bolt of his car ready to make it go, but never driving it nor knowing where to drive it to. Referring to the controversial passage in the Government of India despatch, he remarked: 'That statement shows the goal, the aim towards which we propose to work - not immediately, not in a hurry, but gradually.' 'We cannot drift on for ever without stating a policy,' said Montagu. He pointed out that a new generation had grown up in India which asked 'What are you going to do with us?'; the extremists had drawn up and published their own exposition of the exact form of Swaraj which they wanted; the moderates looked to the Government to say what lines their future policy was to take. 'We have

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1. 11 H.L. Deb. 5s., coll.164-5, 240.
2. Ibid. coll.243-4.

never answered that,' Montagu added, 'and we have put off answering them far too long. At last, and not too soon, a Viceroy has had the courage to state the trend of British policy in India and the lines on which we propose to advance.'[1]

Indian nationalists hailed with delight Montagu's interpretation of the passage in the despatch. In England it only served to revive the controversy. On 22 April 1912 Bonar Law in the Commons referred to Montagu's speech at Cambridge and pointed out the discrepancy between Crewe's interpreta - tion and that of Montagu.[2] Montagu denied that there was any such discrepancy, but went on to add that when every moving section in India had got a policy, when there were preachers and teachers advocating their own ideals, it was not out of place to show to the people of India, as Hardinge had done in his despatch, that there was a direction in which the British occupation was tending, 'some definite aim and object', and that they were in India not merely to administer, but to develop her on a plan.[3]

Curzon raised the topic in the Lords on 24 June 1912 and referred to the gloss put upon the passage in the despatch by Indian nationalists, which had received support from the Under-Secretary's remarks on two occasions.[4] Crewe, in his reply, not only repeated his earlier denial, but referred to the political school in India who cherished the

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1. On Indian Affairs, pp.306-9.
2. 37 H.C.Deb. 5s., col.789.
3. Ibid. col.812.
4. 12 H.L.Deb. 5s, coll.143-6.

dream of Colonial self-government for their country and remarked: 'I say quite frankly that I see no future for India on those lines. I do not believe that the experiment.....of attempting to confer a measure of self-government, with practical freedom from Parliamentary control, upon a race which is not our own.....is one which could be tried.'[1] Cromer and Curzon received with great satisfaction this 'most emphatic and unmistakable repudiation'.[2] But still the anxiety was not wholly removed. On 29 July 1912 Lord Inchape raised the issue once again in the Lords and demanded a statement of the views of His Majesty's Government.[3] Crewe explained that there were three objects of British policy in India: 'to devolve upon local and provincial governments as many of the functions of government as can be safely entrusted to them'; 'to employ as many Indians in the public service as can reasonably be employed'; and 'to continue the pursuit of the two first with the maintenance and permanence of British rule in India'. The Government of India, Crewe asserted, did not and could not have a final goal in view. He once again referred to the dream of Colonial self-government cherished by some Indians and remarked: 'I repeat categorically what I said last time, that there is nothing whatever in the teachings of history so far as I know them, or in the present conditions of the world so far as I understand them, which makes

1. Ibid. coll. 155-6.
2. Ibid. coll. 157, 160.
3. Ibid. coll.740-1.

the realisation of such a dream even remotely possible.' To Crewe the idea of an Indian Dominion was 'a world as remote as any Atlantis or Erewhon that ever was thought of by the ingenious brain of an imaginative writer'. He advised Indians to set aside the vision of becoming prime minister of an Indian Dominion or commander-in-chief of an Indian army in future years and to settle down to closer cooperation with their Western governors.[1]

Only Courtney in the Lords deprecated the tendency 'to put the limit of impossibility on the development that may occur in India'. He recalled the extraordinary changes going on in the Eastern world and the remark made to him by Sir Alfred Lyall shortly before his death, 'It is not impossible that the twentieth century may see the complete withdrawal of Europe from Asia'; and observed: 'However comfortable it may be to ourselves to attempt to dismiss these speculations, we cannot get rid of them.'[2] Crewe agreed with Courtney that the future of India lay on 'the knees of the gods', but pointed out that his main purpose in making the statement was to repudiate the suggestion that the present Government were pursuing a policy in India which was intended to end in self-government or that he and his friends shared the dreams of Indian nationalists about Colonial self-government for that country.[3]

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1. Ibid. coll.741-6.
2. Ibid. coll.748-51.
3. Ibid. coll.751.

These repeated debates in Parliament indicate how serious was the anxiety felt in Great Britain about the future of British rule in India. Nor was this anxiety confined only to those who were immediately interested in India. Those who busied themselves with the wider problems of Imperial policy and relations were equally concerned. Luckily, some of them were men of faith and vision. Returning from India after a short visit in 1912, Philip Kerr [1] wrote in the September Round Table that whether the pace be fast or slow, the goal towards which events in India, propelled by Indian and British alike, were travelling was self-government like the Dominions.[2] Under a very suggestive title 'India: Old Ways and New', another contributor wrote in the December 1912 issue of the same quarterly that conditions in India were changing with a rapidity unknown to previous generations, which made it impossible for the English in that country to go on doing their work empirically, avoiding a philosophy or a creed. And he added: 'It is time we defined our ideas; that we knew clearly what it is that India wants, and how far and by what stages we are going to assist her to get it.'[3]

With all their habitual disinclination to speculate about the future, with all their distaste for the conscious and the explicit, the British could not for long avoid defining their policy in India. The need for such a definition was

1. Later Lord Lothian.
2. 'India and the Empire', The Round Table, September 1912, pp.623-5; J.R.M.Butler, Lord Lothian, p.175.
3. The Round Table, December 1912, p.52.

being felt by many. It was, in a fundamental sense, made inevitable by the challenge of Indian nationalism. The impact of the war only brought the issue to a head and allowed it to be treated 'from a new angle of vision'.

Indian Response to the War

In 1909 Fraser had predicted that the entanglement of Britain in difficulties elsewhere would be the signal for an uprising in India.[1] Returning from a visit to India immediately before the outbreak of the First World War, William Archer had noted that 'the moment England gets into serious trouble elsewhere, India, in her present temper, would burst into a blaze of rebellion'.[2] Germany, too, had probably counted on some such eventuality. When, however, the war broke out in August 1914 India belied the prophets of evil and proved to be 'Germany's greatest disappointment'. Unanimously and enthusiastically the country stood on the side of Great Britain. There was a remarkable outburst of genuine and spontaneous loyalty amongst all sections of the Indian people. Politicians in India behaved admirably. They voiced 'their feelings of unswerving loyalty and enthusiastic devotion to their King-Emperor, and an assurance of their unflinching support to the British Government' and offered to share in the heavy financial burdens imposed by the war on the United Kingdom.[3] Even the erstwhile Extremists, men like Pal

1. 'Britain's Future in India', The Times, 28 June 1909.
2. Archer, India and the Future, p.17.
3. Resolution passed in the Imperial Legislative Council on 8 September 1914. Proceedings of the Imperial Legislative Council, 1914-15, vol.LIII, pp.16-7.

and Tilak, preached cooperation with the Government in its war effort.

Imperial strategy had been so far based on the assumption that in the event of a war India would have to be reinforced with additional troops from home. But no sooner did hostilities commence in 1914 that Hardinge, instead of asking for more troops, pledged India's last man and last gun to the British Government. An Indian expeditionary force was at once despatched to the Western front where it arrived just in time to fill the gaps in the thin red line during the critical winter of 1914, which could not be filled from any other source until the Kitchener armies and the Dominion contingents had been adequately trained and equipped. In the following months the Government of India kept up a steady flow of Indian reinforcements to the Western front and denuded the country almost entirely of regular British troops and her large reserves of artillery, ammunition and transport. Large Indian forces were also employed in the campaigns in East Africa and in the Middle East. In all, India sent one million men to the battlefields. Over £146 millions were voted from the revenues of British India towards the cost of the war, and the princes and other wealthy Indians made generous gifts.[1]

The Congress meeting at Madras in December 1914 conveyed to the King-Emperor and the people of England 'its profound devotion to the Throne, its unswerving allegiance to

1. For India's contribution to the war see J.W.B.Merewether and F.E.Smith, The Indian Corps in France; and India's Contribution to the Great War.

the British connection, and its firm resolve to stand by the Empire, at all hazards and at all costs'. It noted with 'gratitude and satisfaction' the despatch of Indian troops to the Western front and offered to the Viceroy 'its most heartfelt thanks for affording to the people of India an opportunity of showing that, as equal subjects of His Majesty, they are prepared to fight shoulder to shoulder with the people of other parts of the Empire in the defence of right and justice, and in the cause of the Empire'.[1]

The Montagu-Chelmsford Report considered the behaviour of Indian political leaders throughout 1914 and 1915 as 'worthy of all praise' and wondered 'whether a bolder policy from the outset of the war, and a franker inviting of India's cooperation in all forms of war effort might not have done much to steady men's minds'.[2] The Round Table commented in December 1915: 'It is not easy to see what more they could have done, and it is certain that they might easily have done less.'[3]

The reasons for India's loyal and generous response to the war are not difficult to understand. The magnitude of Indian unrest had been much exaggerated and its character misunderstood in official circles and in the British press. At heart India was still loyal. The Morley-Minto reforms had been sufficiently liberal to ease the tension in India and arrest the growing estrangement between the rulers and the

1. Report of the twenty-ninth Indian National Congress, 1914, pp.1-2.
2. Cd. 9109, p.20.
3. The Round Table, December 1915, p.100.

ruled. The revocation of the partition of Bengal had healed a festering sore. Hardinge's policy of trust and conciliation had done much to restore the waning faith and confidence of educated Indians in the British Government. There was a widespread recognition in India of the justice and righteousness of the cause for which England was fighting. Many welcomed the opportunity offered to India of acting on a world-wide stage. Hardinge's decision to despatch Indian troops to the European front was universally applauded in the country. Srinivasa Sastri compared it to Cavour's decision to send Piedmontese armies to fight along with the English and the French in the Crimean War,[1] and not a few hoped that the fields of Flanders and France would give birth to a new India. Their loyalty was fortified by their patriotism. By loyally cooperating with the Empire in its hour of peril, Indians hoped to advance their claims for sharing in its privileges. 'New Angle of Vision.'

India's splendid rally to the cause of the Empire both surprised and gratified the British people, who had been hearing so much and so often of Indian unrest in the preceding years. And the more they were surprised and gratified, the more vocal and fulsome were their gratitude and admiration. 'The Indian Empire,' wrote The Times, 'has overwhelmed the British nation by the completeness and unanimity of its enthusiastic aid.'[2] Premier Asquith remarked that in all the

1. Srinivasa Sastri, Self-government for India under the British Flag, p.1.
2. The Times, 10 September 1914.

moving exhibition of national and Imperial patriotism which the war had evoked there was none which had more touched the feelings of the British people than the magnificent response which the princes and the peoples of India had made to their need.[1] Bonar Law felt that the British people had more reason to be proud of the spontaneous enthusiasm of Indians for their Emperor and the Empire than of the conquest of India.[2]

It was the revelation that India had proved to be not a cause of anxiety but a source of immense strength in the Empire's hour of peril, which caused even the most conservative imperialist in Britain to view the problems of her internal development and place in the Empire from a changed angle. As Chirol wrote: 'If India was willing to fight shoulder to shoulder with the other nations of the Commonwealth for the British Empire, then surely she was qualifying for closer partnership. Closer partnership could never, however, become a living reality unless India was capable of developing qualities essential to self-government on the same lines as all the other members of the British Commonwealth. Here at last was a meeting-ground for British Imperialists and Indian Nationalists.'[3] The Under-Secretary of State for India, Charles Roberts, emphasised the same point in the Commons on 26 November 1914. It was premature, he said, to attempt to anticipate the consequences that might follow from 'this striking and historic event - the participation

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1. 66 H.C. Deb. 5s., coll. 955-6.
2. The Times, 20 May 1915.
3. The Times, 6 June 1918.

of India in force in the World War of the Empire'. 'But it is clear,' he added, 'that India claims to be not a mere dependent of, but a partner in, the Empire and her partnership with us in spirit and on battle-field cannot but alter the angle from which we shall all henceforward look at the problems of India.' And he hoped that 'the common endeavours of these days' would enable India to realise that she was occupying and was 'destined to occupy a place in our free Empire worthy alike of her ancient civilisation and thought, of the valour of her fighting races, and the patriotism of her sons'.[1]

Effect of War on India:

Participation in the war gave India a new sense of self-esteem. She felt that she was tried and not found wanting, that thereby her status had been raised, and that it should be recognised. The proclaimed ideals of the war opened a new vista of hope for her subject people. At the 1914 Congress Mrs. Besant remarked that India was 'not content to be any longer a child in the nursery of the Empire'. 'She is showing the responsibility of man in Europe. Give her the freedom of the man in India.' And Besant demanded this freedom not as a reward but as a matter of right.[2] The president of the 1914 session of the Congress, B.N.Basu, declared that what India wanted above all was that her government should be autonomous within the Empire. India desired, he said, neither subordination nor separation, but 'a joint partnership on

1. 68 H.C.Deb.5s., cols. 1357-58.
2. Report of the twenty-ninth Indian National Congress, 1914, pp. 84-6.

equal terms'.[1] By a formal resolution the Congress appealed to the Government 'to deepen and perpetuate' 'the profound and avowed loyalty' manifested by the Indian people and 'make it an enduring and valuable asset of the Empire' by removing all invidious restrictions between His Majesty's Indian and other subjects, 'by redeeming the pledges of provincial autonomy contained in the despatch of the 25th August 1911, and by taking such steps as may be necessary for the recognition of India as a component part of a federated Empire - in full and free enjoyment of the rights belonging to that status'.[2]

India's immense contributions to the war, the high praise they earned from British statesmen, and the proclaimed ideals of the Allies - all raised expectation in India to the highest pitch. Far away from the scene of actual conflict, Indian politicians had ample time to watch the trend of events. With a vigilant eye and an alert ear they noted the doings and sayings of British and Allied Statesmen. After a few months of the war they detected - rightly or wrongly - a certain caution and restraint in the references of British statesmen to India, in striking contrast to the exuberance of earlier days. They noted a tendency amongst Englishmen to take India's services for granted and even to rate them lower than those of the Dominions. India figured rarely in the schemes for the future and it was feared that her services would be forgotten. Hardinge's viceroyalty and the outbreak of the war

1. Ibid. p.36.
2. Ibid. p.4.

had submerged old suspicions and distrust, but not eliminated them. And when in March 1915 the House of Lords rejected the proposal for the creation of an executive council for the United Provinces, which had been recommended by the legislative council and the Lieutenant-Governor of that province and was supported by the Government of India and the Secretary of State, on the well-worn pleas that it was the demand of a microscopic minority and that personal rule suited the East, members in the Imperial Legislative Council asked more in sorrow than in anger: 'Is this the first fruit of that change in the angle of vision which had been promised by a high authority?'; 'If this is the attitude of our ex-Viceroys and ex-Governors towards us during the war, what will it be after the war? They have been paying us high and extremely flattering compliments upon our loyalty and devotion to the British Crown, and yet in the same breath they tell that we are in such a backward and primitive condition that even an executive council would be too good for us.'[1] The incident was both revealing and instructive.

India and Imperial Federation

The discussions throughout the Empire of schemes of Imperial federation convinced many an Indian politician that important changes were imminent in the constitution of the Empire. Indian nationalists claimed that their country had proved her loyalty to the Empire and was willing to remain steadfast to the British connection in the same way as the

1. Proceedings of the Imperial Legislative Council, 1914-15, vol. LIII, pp.606, 609, 637.

Dominions, but like the latter she must be given 'Home Rule'. The suggestion in certain quarters that an Imperial parliament and council, composed of representatives from the Dominions and the United Kingdom, should in future be responsible for the government of India and other dependencies caused profound misgivings in India. At once the press and the platform rang with the cry: 'Shall the Colonies rule India?'; 'Was this to be the reward for all our loyalty and sacrifices?'; 'Will India be the Cinderella of the Empire?' Smarting under the treatment of Indians in the Colonies, Indian opinion reacted violently to any suggestion of allowing the Dominions to have a finger in their pie. Indian politicians felt that a policy of silence and trustfulness might end in the tightening of fetters and their having to serve more masters and worse masters. They began to demand, therefore, that before India joined any Imperial federation she must have self-government like the Dominions and elevated to equal status.

Demand for a Declaration of British Policy

Lord Willingdon, the Governor of Bombay, was tremendously impressed with India's loyal and magnificent services in the war, and felt that she should be rewarded handsomely.[1] Early in 1915 he asked Gokhale to submit to him a scheme of minimum reforms that would satisfy India after the war. Gokhale's scheme, which he submitted to Willingdon two days before his death on 19 February 1915, demanded, among other things, almost complete provincial autonomy, with a legislature

1. Lloyd George, War Memoirs, vol.iv, pp.1739-42.

of 75 - 100, of which four-fifths was to be elected, and an executive of six - three Indians and three English - not dependent on the vote of the majority, its relations with the legislature being roughly similar to those between the Imperial Government and the Reichstag in Germany; a Government of India, increasingly amenable to a non-official majority and freed from the leading strings of the Secretary of State, whose council was to be abolished and position steadily approximated to that of the Secretary of State for the Colonies.[1] Willingdon wrote to leaders at home to make a reassuring move, but 'either got no answer or no encouragement'.[2] Pherozeshah Mehta soon followed Gokhale to the grave, and the Congress was robbed of the moderating influence of two of its most prominent leaders. Under the influence of the excitement of the times, the uncertainty as to the intentions of the Government, and the apprehensions regarding India's position in a future reconstructed Empire, the political cauldron began to boil in India. Mrs. Besant acted as the peace-maker between the Moderates and the Extremists and began preparations for launching a Home Rule movement. She was taking, she said, the advice given by Bonar Law to the Dominions to strike while the iron was hot. The followers of Gokhale and Mehta were anxious not to embarrass the Government in any way, but neither did they wish to allow India's case to go by default. They did not

1. Srinivasa Sastri, Life of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, pp.112-3; The Times, 15 August 1917.
2. Willingdon to Lloyd George, 22 January 1916; Lloyd George, War Memoirs, vol.iv, p.1739.

fail to realise that no reforms granted by the authorities after the war would suffice to satisfy the new political hunger of educated Indians. But if the Government could be persuaded to avow an intention of leading India to self-government, the differences between the rulers and the ruled would be narrowed down to questions of method and pace of advance. In such a situation it would not be difficult for reasonable and moderate men to throw the weight of their influence and cooperation on the side of the authorities, thus ensuring peaceful and harmonious, but steady, political evolution of India. But what about the disclaimers of Crewe in 1912? If the British Government still believed with Crewe that self-government was an impossibility for India, then certainly the gulf between Britain and India was too wide to be bridged. The loyalty of the Moderates was as firm as their patriotism. It was a matter of honest and unalterable conviction with them that India's political destiny could only be realised through patient and constitutional means, in co-operation with their British rulers. Despite all assertions to the contrary, these men of faith still hoped that British statesmen would prove true to their traditional genius and recognise India's political aspirations as legitimate. Their first task, as they conceived it, was to secure from the authorities a definite and unequivocal declaration that it was the latter's aim and intention to grant India self-government like the Dominions in the fulness of time. In an article in Young India on 17 November 1915 Srinivasa Sastri urged the

necessity of demanding such an undertaking from the British Government.[1] In his presidential address to the 1915 Congress Sir Satyendra Sinha asserted that nothing but 'a rational and inspiring ideal' could 'still the throbbing pain in the soul of awakening India'. After reiterating that ultimate self-government within the Empire was the goal of Indian nationalism, Sinha appealed to the British nation 'to declare their ungrudging approval of the goal' to which Indians aspired, 'to declare their inflexible resolution to equip India for her journey to that goal and furnish her escort on the long and weary road'. Such a declaration by Britain, Sinha said, would be the most distinguished way of marking her appreciation of India's loyalty and services; it would touch the heart and appeal to the imagination of Indians far more than any specific political reforms. These latter, he argued, might fall short of the high expectations raised by the utterances of English statesmen as to the future place of India in the Empire and cause general disappointment, but an authoritative declaration of Britain's resolve to lead India to self-government would, without causing such disappointment, convince the Indian people that the pace of reforms would be reasonably accelerated and that henceforth it would be 'only a question of patient preparation'.

'An authentic and definite proclamation with regard to which there will be no evasion, no misunderstanding possible', 'a frank and full statement of the policy of the

1. Srinivasa Sastri, Speeches and Writings, p.17.

Government as regards the future of India' - this is what Sinha demanded 'so that hope may come where despair holds sway and faith where doubt spreads its darkening shadow'. Cleverly enough, Sinha, instead of referring to the recent dampers of Crewe, referred to the remark of Joseph Chailley in his book Administrative Problems of British India, published in 1910, to the effect that the dreams of Malcolm and Elphinstone no longer inspired the policy of the British in India who were now determined never to let India go,[1] and warned: 'I for myself say with all the emphasis and earnestness that I command that if the noble policy of Malcolm and Elphinstone, Canning and Ripon, Bright and Morley, is not steadily, consistently and unflinchingly adhered to the moderate party amongst us will soon be depleted of all that is fine and noble in human character.'[2]

That is how Sinha, that most moderate and sensible and loyal of Indians, tried to pin down the British nation and Government. Lord Chelmsford revealed later that 'the ball was set rolling' by Sinha's remarkable address to the Congress in December 1915.[3] It inspired him, the future Governor-General of India, and many others to think about the goal of British policy in India and realise the need for a declaration.

Post-War Reforms on Anvil.

Before he relinquished charge as Governor-General of

1. Chailley, Administrative Problems of British India, pp.164-6.
2. Report of the thirtieth Indian National Congress, 1915, pp.21-30.
3. 69 H.L. Deb. 5s., coll.266-7; C.H.Setalvad, Recollections and Reflections, p.284.

India in April 1916, Hardinge had, after consultation with the heads of local governments, put forward certain proposals for post-war reforms in India to the authorities at home. He had been impressed with the necessity of important political changes and was in favour of them, but he reckoned on an early termination of the war and thought that the question might possibly stand over for settlement till then.[1]

The new Governor-General, Chelmsford, came to India with his mind made up that a declaration of British policy in India was necessary.[2] At the very first meeting of his Executive Council held in May 1916 he propounded two questions to it:

'1) What is the goal of British rule in India?

'2) What are the steps on the road to that goal?'[3]

Their deliberations led to the conclusion that 'the endowment of British India as an integral part of the British Empire with self-government was the goal of British rule' and that advance towards this goal should be made along three roads simultaneously, viz., the liberalisation of local self-government, the more responsible employment of Indians in administration, and the enlargement of the constitutional powers of the provincial legislative councils.[4] From May to October 1916 the Government of India were engaged in a detailed examination of the next instalment of reforms. In November they submitted their final proposals to the Secretary of State. Unfortunately, however, Chelmsford could not take the Indian public into

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1. 26 H.L Deb.5s., coll.767-8; 37 H.L.Deb.5s., col.941.
2. 37 H.L.Deb.5s., col.986.
3. Proceedings of the Imperial Legislative Council, 1917-18, vol.LVI, p.17.
4. Ibid. pp.17-8.

confidence. The inevitable drawback of the Government of India of having 'to work in the dark' and their inability to reveal anything unless approved by the authorities at home - of which Chelmsford complained to Geoffrey Dawson in another connection[1] - stood in his way.

Indian politicians had expected some announcement of policy in Chelmsford's opening speech to the Imperial Legislative Council in September 1916, but were disappointed. It was already rumoured that the Government of India were busy considering a scheme of future reforms, but when Indian members enquired in the Imperial Legislative Council whether it was so, and would the Government publish their proposals before final decision was reached, the Home Member merely replied that the Government were 'unable to make any statement in the matter'.[2] It was this ignorance about the Government's intentions and the knowledge that reforms were upon the anvil which, more than anything else, exasperated political India. Anxious lest their case go by default, 19 non-official members of the Imperial Legislative Council hurriedly put their heads together and produced a memorandum, containing, what they called, their 'humble suggestions' regarding post-war reforms in India, and submitted it to the Viceroy in September 1916. They referred to the probability of the reconstruction of the Empire after the war and demanded for India a place similar to that of the self-governing Dominions. They pointed to the unsatisfactory character of the existing legislative councils and the various

1. The History of The Times, vol.iv, pt.II, p.842.
2. Proceedings of the Imperial Legislative Council, 1916-17, vol.LV, pp.45-6, 51.

disabilities under which Indians suffered at home and abroad. After referring to the expectations aroused in the country and the hopes held out that in future the problems of Indian administration would be looked at from a new angle of vision, the memorialists remarked: 'India does not claim any reward for her loyalty, but she has a right to expect that the want of confidence on the part of Government, to which she not unnaturally ascribes her present state, should now be a thing of the past and that she should no longer occupy a position of subordination but one of comradeship. This would assure the Indian people that England is ready and willing to help them to attain self-government under the aegis of the British Crown, and thus discharge the noble mission which she has undertaken and to which she has so often given voluntary expression. through her rulers and statesmen. What is wanted is not merely good government or efficient administration, but government that is acceptable to the people because it is responsible to them. This is what, India understands, would constitute the changed angle of vision.'[1]

The scheme of reforms which the memorandum postulated was soon afterwards adopted by the Congress and the Muslim League, with slight modifications, and came to be known as 'the Congress-League scheme'.

The Congress-League Scheme

Aided by the unnecessary reticence of the Government,

1. 'Memorandum submitted by nineteen elected members of the Imperial Legislative Council to the Viceroy with regard to 'post-war reforms' in India.' The memorandum is reproduced in India's Goal, pp.1-7.

Indian nationalists closed their ranks. The Extremists re-entered the Congress and by the end of 1916 the Congress-League concordat was signed. Indian nationalism began to speak with a new and immensely strengthened confidence. The Congress-League scheme demanded that 'the King-Emperor should be pleased to issue a proclamation that it is the aim and intention of British policy to confer self-government on India at an early date', that 'definite steps should be taken towards self-government by granting the reforms contained in the scheme', and that 'in the reconstruction of the Empire India (should) be lifted from the position of a dependency to that of an equal partner in the Empire with the self-governing Dominions'. The main reforms it urged were: provincial autonomy; four-fifths of the central and provincial legislatures to be elected; half the members of the central and provincial governments to be chosen by the elected members of their respective legislatures; the executives to be bound to act in accordance with the resolutions passed by their legislatures, unless vetoed by the Governor-General or the Governors - in the latter event, if the resolution were to be passed again after an interval of not less than one year, it was to be binding in any case; the central legislature to have 'no power to interfere with the Government of India's direction of the military affairs and the foreign and political relations[1] of India'; the relations of the Secretary of State with the Government of India to be similar to those of the Colonial

1. By 'political relations' in India was meant the relations of the Government of India with the Indian States.

Secretary with the Dominion governments; and India to have an equal status with the Dominions in any body concerned with Imperial affairs.[1]

In the absence of any alternative proposals on behalf of the Government, the Congress-League scheme monopolised the political stage in India and opinion began to crystallise fast in its favour. The Home Rule Leagues of Tilak and Besant daily gained fresh converts. The unanimous demand of Indian nationalists for a declaration of British policy came to be supported by the Bishops of Calcutta [2] and Madras [3] and by papers like the Times of India [4] and The Times.[5] The Government of India sent repeated letters and telegrams to the Secretary of State drawing his attention to the fact that the situation in India was deteriorating and would continue to do so in the absence of a clear declaration of policy.[6] Lloyd George's small War Cabinet, however, in spite of its many other advantages, was overburdened with work and had no time to deal with the urgent issues to which the Viceroy was constantly drawing attention.[7]

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1. 'The Congress-League Scheme', India's Goal, pp. 13-9.
2. The Indian Review, August 1917, p.542.
3. The Nineteenth Century and After, August 1916, pp.265-83; The Indian Review, July 1917, pp. 449-54.
4. The Times of India, 20 June 1917; 2 August 1917.
5. The Times, 2 May 1917.
6. 26 H.L.Deb. 5s., col. 768.
7. Austen Chamberlain, Down the Years, p.132.

The Round Table Group and India

Fortunately for India, that resourceful combination [1] in England, called the Round Table Group, became interested in Indian problems quite early in its career. Lionel Curtis, 'the Prophet' [2] of the Group, had come to know Sir James Meston and William Marris, both of the Indian Civil Service, whose services had been borrowed by the South African Government, while in South Africa in 1906. Engaged in exploring the possibilities of Imperial federation, Curtis, along with Philip Kerr and William Marris, visited Canada in 1909. It was during this visit, Curtis tells us, while walking together one day through a forest on the Pacific slopes and discussing with Marris Indian anarchist troubles, that the latter told Curtis that 'self-government ....., however distant, was the only intelligible goal of British policy in India'.[3] Referring to this incident, Curtis wrote later: 'I have since looked back to this walk as one of the milestones in my education. So far I had thought of self-government as a Western institution .....

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1. Lord Riddell noted in his diary the remark made by Lloyd George in 1921: 'L.G. in talking of the Round Table Group remarked, 'It is a very powerful combination - in its way perhaps the most powerful in the country. Each member of the group brings to its deliberations certain definite and important qualities, and behind the scenes they have much power and influence'. Riddell, Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference and After, 1918 - 23, pp. pp. 329-30.
2. J.E.Wrench, Geoffrey Dawson and Our Times, p.39.
3. Curtis, Dyarchy, p.41.

It was from that moment that I first began to think of 'the Government of each by each, and of all by all' not merely as a principle of Western life, but rather of all human life, as the goal to which all human societies must tend. It was from that moment that I began to think of the British Commonwealth as the greatest instrument ever devised for enabling that principle to be realised, not merely for the children of Europe but for all races and kindred and peoples and tongues. And it is for this reason that I have ceased to speak of the British Empire and called the book in which I published my views The Commonwealth of Nations.' [1]

Though Curtis had started realising the importance of India as a factor in the problem of Imperial reconstruction, he still thought that the mutual relations of the United Kingdom and the Dominions - all self-governing - should be adjusted first and the problem of India could wait. But while the draft chapters of The Commonwealth of Nations were being circulated to the members of the Group in 1912, Meston and Marris urged the vital significance of India as a factor in the problem being studied

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1. Ibid. p. 42. This explanation for the choice of the term 'Commonwealth' by Curtis may be compared with the one he gave to Professor W. K. Hancock later. See Hancock, Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs, vol. i, p.54.

and the need of India's representation at the Imperial Conference.[1] In 1912 Philip Kerr visited India and on his return wrote in the September Round Table that self-government after the manner of the Dominions was the only conceivable goal for India.[2] In an unpublished memorandum of the same year he made proposals for the representation of India in the Imperial Parliament.[3] In December 1912 the Round Table carried an article which pointed to the insufficiency of old ways in India and pleaded for a definition of British Policy in that country.[4]

The war encouraged the Group to intensify their campaign for closer Imperial union. It also served to underline the immense political, military and economic value of India to the Empire and persuaded the Group to believe that India could not be left out of any scheme of Imperial reorganisation. Almost all prominent British statesmen pointed out - in reply to Curtis's query - that an Imperial cabinet without the representative of India was inconceivable.[5] The Round Table

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1. Ibid. p.49.
2. 'India and the Empire', The Round Table, September 1912, p.623; Butler, op.cit. p.175.
3. Butler, op.cit. pp. 49, 175.
4. 'India: Old Ways and New', The Round Table, December 1912, pp.52-80.
5. Curtis, op.cit. p.77.

vigorously supported the Indian demand for representation at the Imperial Conference. Prominent members of the Group, like Curtis, Kerr and G.R. Parkin, preached the new idea of the Commonwealth as a school for freedom and the need of starting India on the path of eventual self-government within the Empire.[1]

During the autumn of 1915, while the Group was enagaged on the chapters dealing with India, intended to form part of the proposed second volume of The Commonwealth of Nations, it met regularly once a fortnight in London and included Sir William Duke, [2] Sir Lionel Abrahams, [3] Reginald Coupland, [4] Philip Kerr and Lionel Curtis. After a careful examination of the Indian problem the Group reached many important conclusions: [5] The attitude taken by Indians in the war had proved that the country was riper than had been supposed for a further instalment of reform. It was, however, imperative to decide what was the goal of British policy in India before discussing any further steps in constitutional advance. The only conceivable goal, it was recognised, was self-government. A

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1. For the views of Curtis see The Problem of the Commonwealth and for those of Kerr and Parkin The Empire and the Future.
2. Member of the council of the Secretary of State for India; formerly Lt. Governor of Bengal.
3. In charge of financial questions at the India Office.
4. Historian; Fellow of All Souls' College, Oxford; Beit Professor of Colonial History, Oxford, 1920-48.
5. Curtis, op.cit. pp. xxi - xxiv.

closer examination of the term 'self-government' revealed that it was ambiguous. 'The only meaning of self-government which bore the test of examination was responsible government for India within the Commonwealth on lines which could not stop short of those by which the Dominions had reached their present position.' It was felt that India could not advance by one step to full responsible government and that her progress towards it must be by stages. It was also realised that any further progress on the lines of the Morley-Minto reforms would lead to disaster, for a further increase of the non-official element in the legislative councils would give the latter power to paralyse government at every turn, but no power and responsibility of conducting government for themselves. The essence of the problem was, therefore, to find a method of introducing true responsible government in a limited and manageable field of administration, which could be contracted or extended in accordance with practical results attained without imperilling the structure of government itself. The method by which this gradual and safe advance to responsible government could be made was suggested in a memorandum drawn for the Group by William Duke, It was later nicknamed 'dyarchy' and became the basis of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. Chelmsford had shown interest in the inquiries of the Group and at his request the final draft of the Duke memorandum was sent to him in May 1916.

In October 1916 Curtis reached India to study the situation on the spot and stayed there for about a year and

a half. He discussed the problem of Indian reforms with Chelmsford, Meston, Marris, Chirol [1] and Malcolm Hailey.[2] As luck would have it, one of the very first letters which Curtis wrote to Kerr in November 1916, giving his impressions of the Indian situation, endorsed by Meston, Marris and Chirol, leaked out. It was given wide publicity in the Indian press and created quite a furore in the country. His association with high officials, and especially with Chirol, made him look a highly sinister figure to the childishly suspicious imagination of political India. It was feared that he and his Group were busy hatching a plan of Imperial federation which would subject India to Colonial domination. The Indian press heaped abuses upon him; the Congress session of 1916 was full of references to him; and in the Imperial Legislative Council members asked questions about his alleged designs. Curtis then came into the open and started his campaign of educating Indian public opinion regarding the future constitutional reforms, the meaning of responsible government and the plan of dyarchy, through his famous Letters to the people of India. Though Curtis contributed much towards the political training of India and exercised considerable influence over a certain section of moderate Indian opinion, he introduced a rather upsetting element into the already tense atmosphere of the country. It is also possible that the chances of the acceptance of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report were prejudiced because many Indian politicians traced the shadow of Curtis across it.

1. Chirol was on one of his frequent visits to India at the time.
2. The present Lord Hailey. He was in 1916 the Chief Commissioner of Delhi.

As private secretary to the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, Philip Kerr, exerted his influence in favour of India's representation at the Imperial War Conference, the announcement of August 1917, and during the further stages of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms.[1] Curtis provided many of the arguments of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report. It was actually written by Marris. The Round Table lent the weight of its authority and support to the policy of reforms. Curtis's great influence with men like Milner and Selborne and his tireless campaign in favour of the speedy enactment of the reform proposals were no mean assets to Montagu in his battle to launch India on the path to responsible self-government within the Empire.

India and the Imperial Conference

The first Colonial Conference held in 1887 was a motley gathering of 121 delegates, representing the United Kingdom, the self-governing Colonies, the Crown Colonies, and the protectorates. India was not represented, though the Secretary of State for India attended the formal opening of the Conference.[2] Apparently because the Conference did not include any representatives of the Empire of India, it was officially designated 'Colonial' and not 'Imperial'.[3] The second Colonial Conference in 1897 was restricted to the representatives of the mother country and the self-governing Colonies. Prior to the meeting of the third Colonial Conference in 1902

1. Butler, op.cit. pp.82, 175-6; Graham Pole, India in Transition, pp.23-4.
2. C. 5091, vol.1, p.1.
3. Ibid. p.371.

it was known that one of the principal items on its agenda was the question of a preferential tariff within the Empire. The Bengal Chamber of Commerce - an organisation of English commercial interests in India - urged that, in view of the importance of the subject to be discussed, India should be represented at the forthcoming Conference.[1] The Government of India and the Secretary of State backed their demand.[2] Joseph Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, agreed, for his ultimate aim was free trade within the Empire and he desired that any preliminary arrangement made at the Conference 'should be as comprehensive as possible'.[3] 'A representative of the India Office', T.W.Holderness, accordingly, attended the meetings of the Colonial Conference in 1902.[4] When, in April 1905, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, A. Lyttleton, communicated to the self-governing Colonies his suggestions regarding the future organisation of Colonial Conferences, he wrote: 'The Secretary of State for the Colonies would represent His Majesty's Government. India, whenever her interests required it, would also be represented. The other members of the Council would be the Prime Ministers of the Colonies represented at the Conference of 1902.'[5] This was also the view taken by the Liberal Government which came into power in December 1905. India was Britain's largest single customer. She was 'the pivot' of British Imperial

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1. C.O. 323/475/29267.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid. Also C.O. 532/2/9417; and Hamilton to Curzon, 24 July 1902.
5. Cd. 2785, p.3.

policy and Britain's greatest military asset. No organisation which dealt with matters concerning Imperial defence and trade could afford to neglect India. The demand that India should be fully represented at the next Colonial Conference was also pressed by certain members of Parliament.[1] Sir Henry Cotton even suggested in 1906 that the British Government should not only invite a representative official of the Government of India to attend the Conference, 'but also a representative of the people themselves, chosen, if need be, by the non-official members of the legislative councils'.[2] This was almost a decade before Indians themselves demanded any such representation. The Liberal Government favoured the representation of India.[3] On 29 May 1906 Campbell-Bannerman announced in the Commons: 'The practice adopted at the previous Conferences provides for the presence of representatives of different Departments of the Government, and under this arrangement the representation of India will be secured.'[4] Asquith reiterated the same assurance in Parliament on 19 February 1907. He also declared: 'The question of the representation of India at future Conferences will no doubt enter into the discussion of the future constitution of the Conference itself.'[5] The character and manner of India's representation at the Colonial Conference of 1907 was explained

1. Charles Dilke, J.D.Rees and H.Cotton. See 157 H.C.Deb.4s., Coll.940-1; 158 H.C.Deb. 4s., coll.297, 1380; 169 H.C.Deb.4s coll.721, 743.
2. 158 H.C. Deb.4s., col.1380.
3. 'We are of opinion that India should be represented.' Campbell-Bannerman, 21 May 1906; 157 H.C.Deb.4s., col.941.
4. 158 H.C.Deb.4s., col.297.
5. 169 H.C.Deb.4s., col.721. See also C.O. 532/2/5841.

by Morley in a letter to Minto: 'About the Colonial Conference which is to assemble by and by, we have promised - as you know - that India should be represented, but of course it cannot be represented in the same sense in which Canada or Australia is. The idea is that the Secretary of State for India should be there, with a sort of assessor, perhaps two: I am thinking of Sir James Mackay, and Mr. Holderness.'[1] The Colonial Conference of 1907 was attended by Morley, Mackay[2] and Holderness. The India Office presented a 'memorandum on preferential tariffs in their relation to India' to the Conference.[3] Mackay also put forward ably the Indian point of view on the subject of preferential trade at the meetings of the Conference. The representatives of the Colonies, particularly those of Australia, jealous of their freedom and status, did not take kindly to India's presence.[4] Their objections appear to have been mainly on three grounds: firstly, that India was not self-governing;[5] secondly, that her representation would only mean an additional vote and influence for Great Britain in the deliberations of the Conference; and thirdly, that the paramount consideration of the British Government for their Indian trade made them averse to the scheme of preferential trade on

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1. Morley to Minto, 15 February 1907. Mackay and Holderness were members of the council of the Secretary of State for India.
2. Mackay was the regular representative of the India Office at the Conference. C.O. 532/2/9417.
3. Cd. 3524, pp.453-7.
4. Cd. 3523, pp.294, 325.
5. 'Mr. Deakin.....actually contended that India had no right to a place at the Conference table, because not self-governing. I dealt faithfully with him on the point.' Morley to Minto, 2 May 1907.

which the Colonies were very keen.[1]

At the 1907 Conference the self-governing Colonies decided to style themselves Dominions. By another resolution it was agreed that future Conferences should be designated 'Imperial' and devoted to the discussion of questions of common interest 'as between His Majesty's Government and his Governments of the self-governing Dominions beyond the seas'.[2] The peers of the Empire thus separated themselves from its subject communities and self-government became the qualification for membership of the Imperial Conference. India's exclusion, though regretted by many,[3] became a fact.

The published report of the proceedings of the 1907 Conference does not reveal as to what was actually the decision of the Conference on the subject of India's representation at its future meetings. Ministerial replies to questions in Parliament, however, indicate that though the Conference was henceforth to be confined to the autonomous governments of the Empire, the Secretary of State for India could be present when Indian interests required it.[4] 'India will be represented at the Imperial Conference by the Secretary of State in all matters in which her interests are or may be involved,' assured the Prime Minister on 22 March 1911.[5] India,

1. The Australian Minister of Trade and Customs, Sir William Lyne, complained at the Conference: 'I do not like your absolutely ignoring the whole of the British Colonies excepting India.' Cd. 3523, p.325.
2. Ibid. p.v.
3. e.g. Curzon, The Place of India in the Empire, pp.9, 22-3, 46 and Keith, Imperial Unity and the Dominions, pp.52-3,588.
4. 23 H.C. Deb. 5s., col1.198, 397, 899, 2419 -20.
5. Ibid. col.397.

accordingly, made a brief appearance at the Imperial Conference of 1911. The Secretary of State, Lord Crewe, along with Sir Herbert Risley, a member of his council, was present on the eleventh day of its meeting and addressed the Conference on the need of treating sympathetically the question of Indian immigrants to the Dominions.[1]

India's services in the war revealed her to the Empire and strengthened her claim for admission to its inner circle. On 22 September 1915 a non-official resolution was moved in the Imperial Legislative Council demanding that in future India should be officially represented in the Imperial Conference. The mover of the resolution, Sir Muhammad Shafi, claimed that not merely on the ground of the magnitude of her interests affected should India in justice have a voice in the Imperial deliberations: he urged that the part she had played in the war showed that she was actually worthy of exercising the privilege for which she asked.[2]

The Viceroy spoke immediately after the mover and announced that his Government gladly accepted the resolution and, if the Council passed it, would readily take action upon it. He went further and remarked that he was'authorised by His Majesty's Government, while preserving their full liberty of judgment and without committing them to principles or details, to give an undertaking' that the resolution would receive their most careful consideration, 'although the

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1. Cd. 5745, pp.394-8.
2. Proceedings of the Imperial Legislative Council, 1915-16, vol.LIV, pp.37-41.

ultimate decision of His Majesty's Government must necessarily depend largely on the attitude of other members of the Conference'. Hardinge himself answered some of the possible objections that could be raised against India's membership of the Imperial Conference. Much had happened, he said, since the last Conference was held in 1911 which would leave a lasting mark upon the British Empire, and to him it was inconceivable that Dominion Statesmen would not have realised the great and important position that India occupied within the Empire. 'It is true,' Hardinge said, 'that India is not a self-governing Dominion, but that seems hardly a reason why she should not be suitably represented at future Conferences. India's size, population, wealth, military resources, and, lastly, her patriotism demand it.' Hardinge asserted that no Conference could afford to debate great Imperial issues in which India was vitally concerned, and at the same time to disregard her. How could questions of the defence of the Empire be discussed without India which was 'the greatest military asset of the Empire outside the United Kingdom'; or of commerce without 'England's best customer?' asked Hardinge. He concluded by saying: 'To concede the direct representation of India at future Imperial Conferences does not strike me as a very revolutionary or far-reaching concession to make to Indian public opinion and to India's just claims, and I feel confident that if, and when, this question is placed in its true light before the Governments of the self-governing Dominions, they will regard it from that wider angle of vision

from which we hope other Indian questions may be viewed in the near future, so that the people of India may be made to feel what they really are, in the words of Mr. Asquith, 'conscious members of a living partnership all over the world under the same flag'.'[1]

The Council passed the resolution unanimously and the Government's attitude in meeting it more than half-way gladdened the hearts of Indian politicians. The proposal was well-received in the United Kingdom and the Dominion press. The Round Table pleaded for India's representation at the Imperial Conference. Constitutional niceties, it said, need not be pressed too far. The Imperial Conference was not a sovereign body. It had no executive authority or legislative power. It was a purely deliberative and consultative piece of machinery which could easily accommodate a representative of a great dependency like India. What India asked for, said the quarterly, might be an anomaly, but mere logic and pedantry should not decide a question which was essentially one of Imperial statesmanship. If India was disappointed in this matter, her people would feel it acutely, for with them it was far more a gain of status and recognition that was sought than any material advantage. It pointed out that any existing differences between India and the Dominions stood a better chance of being solved by such a course, more so because the trenches and the hospitals had afforded to each a wholly new understanding and appreciation of the other's character.[2] Speaking

1. Ibid., pp. 41-43.
2. 'India and the Imperial Conference', The Round Table, December 1915, pp.86-119.

before a conference of the Empire Parliamentary Association in London in the summer of 1916, Lord Islington, the Under-Secretary of State for India, strongly urged India's representation at the Imperial Conference because of 'her size, her geographical position, volume of trade, intellectual and political development, and...her proved loyalty to the Crown'.[1]

On 25 December 1916, when Lloyd George summoned the Imperial War Conference, the Secretary of State for India was invited to represent India. Austen Chamberlain telegraphed to the Viceroy to select two gentlemen to assist him at the proposed Conference.[2] In spite of the fact that the question of India's representation at the Imperial Conference had been before the British Government for such a long time and that they appear to have decided already in favour of it,[3] one is rather surprised to learn from Lloyd George's War Memoirs that there had been no earlier understanding with the Dominion Premiers on the issue. Lloyd George wrote that a good 'amount of care and caution' was bestowed on the question of India's representation at the proposed gathering. India had not participated in the earlier Imperial Conferences and the constitution of the Conference precluded her participation as she was not self-governing. 'There was, therefore,' wrote Lloyd George, 'no authority by which India could be invited to an Imperial Conference, and no understanding with the

1. 'India and the Empire', Imperial Problems, p.21.
2. The Times, 27 December 1916.
3. Sir George Barnes, the Commerce Member of the Government of India, told the Bengal Chamber of Commerce on 29 July 1916 that 'India's participation in the councils of the Empire had been promised definitely by the Secretary of State for India and the Prime Minister'. The Times, 31 July 1916.

Dominion Premiers to permit of such a new development. But India had made a large contribution of men and money to the carrying on of the War, and her troops were fighting alongside white soldiers and against white enemies. This fact had created a new self-consciousness among the Indians that showed itself in a demand for greater recognition, and it also made consultation with them about the further conduct of the War just and desirable. Hence the Imperial Conference of 1917 was summoned on a special basis, outside the official constitution.'[1]

The Imperial War Conference commenced its sittings in March 1917. India was represented by the Secretary of State and three delegates from India, Sir James Meston, Sir S.P. Sinha and the Maharaja of Bikaner. The Indian delegates were warmly welcomed and they created a good impression both inside and outside the Conference. It was generally felt that India had established her right to be in the inner circle of the Empire. On 4 April 1917, at Sir Joseph Ward's suggestion, the Conference decided to pass a resolution recommending a modification of the constitution of the regular Imperial Conference so as to permit of India's participation at its future meetings.[2] The formal resolution to this effect was duly passed on 13 April.[3] On Sinha's suggestion, which was readily accepted, India also found a mention in the famous constitutional resolution moved by Sir Robert Borden on 16 April 1917,

1. Lloyd George, War Memoirs, vol.iv, pp.1737-38.
2. Cd. 8566, pp.15-6.
3. Ibid. pp.22-3.

which claimed for the Dominions and India a 'right to an adequate voice in foreign policy and in foreign relations'.[1] But while the Dominions were described in this resolution as 'autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth', India could only be called 'an important part of the same'.

Lloyd George would like us to believe that the resolution with regard to India's representation at future Imperial Conferences was not only unpremeditated, but that it also became a factor in India's future constitutional development. 'Its inception,' he wrote, 'was not the whim of any individual, but was attributable largely to the cordial welcome accorded by the Heads of Dominions to the representatives of India as equals in the Council Chamber of the Empire in its greatest emergency.' 'This resolution,' he added, 'was important, not merely because it opened the door for the future appearance of India alongside the Dominions at Imperial Conferences, but because it marked the first Imperial recognition of the altered status of India. It was one of the preliminary stages of the reforms on Indian administration, which started that great country on the pathway towards full self-government within the British Commonwealth.'[2] Having admitted India to

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1. Ibid. pp.49-50.
2. Lloyd George, War Memoirs, vol.iv, pp.1763-64. Lloyd George disclosed in the House of Commons on 7 November 1929 that it was not merely the British Cabinet but the Imperial War Cabinet which sanctioned the declaration of 20 August 1917. 'We decided in the Imperial War Cabinet, as it was then in 1917 - this country with the Prime Ministers of all the Dominions present - that there should be accorded to the people of India a considerable measure of self-government, limited, restricted, experimental, tentative, but we promised.....that gradually, if the experiment were successful, we would extend it until India ultimately enjoyed full partnership in the Empire on equal terms with our great Dominions.' 231 H.C.Deb.5s., coll.1314-16.

partnership on equal terms, the Imperial statesmen might well have told themselves: 'Let us at least educate our partner!'

Towards a Declaration of Policy:

The Indian delegates to the Imperial War Conference of 1917 further pressed the need for a declaration of British policy in relation to Indian aspirations on the Secretary of State, Austen Chamberlain, and converted him to their view.[1]

In May 1917 Chamberlain invited the attention of the Cabinet to the very serious problems with which the Govern - ment of India were faced and asked for a decision on the action to be taken. He circulated to his colleagues the re- form proposals already submitted by the Government of India, along with his comments, and his suggestions for making known the policy of the British Government in India.[2] In their despatch of 24 November 1916 the Government of India had recommended a simultaneous advance on three lines:

1) the liberalisation of local self-government;

2) the increasing association of Indians in the higher administrative posts; and 3) the enlargement of the con- stitutional powers of the provincial legislative councils, the increase in the number of their elected members and the broad- ening of their electorates.[3] The Government of India had not committed themselves to any specific form of self-government. Their proposals with regard to the provincial legislative councils were an extension of the Morley-Minto reforms. In fact, their remark 'We have no wish to develop the Councils

1. Sinha, Speeches and Writings, Appendix, pp.xix-xx.
2. Ronaldshay, The Life of Lord Curzon, vol.iii,p.162.
3. Ibid. p.165.

as quasi-Parliaments'[1] would suggest that the hypnotic influence of the celebrated disclaimers of Morley and Minto still persisted. Chamberlain detected the weak spot of the Government of India's proposals in this matter and pointed out that to increase the number of elected members of a legislative body without at the same time giving them any real control in any department of government would merely result in an embarrassing growth of irresponsible critics without effecting any real advance in the direction of self-government. He instead suggested that a scheme should be attempted which would train legislators in responsibility and authority. As to the formula for the purpose of making known the policy of the British Government in India, on which the Government of India were so insistent, Chamberlain suggested avowal of an intention to foster the development of free institutions with a view to ultimate self-government.[2]

Before Chamberlain resigned on 14 July 1917 over the Mesopotamian affair, the Cabinet had agreed that a declaration of British policy in India should be made and that the Secretary of State should visit India to confer with the men on the spot. There was, however, no agreement till then on the exact form in which the declaration of British policy should be made. The delay, Ronaldshay tells us, was due to the fact that a prominent member of the Cabinet objected to the use of the term 'self-government' in any declaration for the reason that in the mouths of Englishmen the term 'self-

1. Zetland, 'Essayez', p. 82.
2. Ronaldshay, The Life of Lord Curzon, vol.iii, p.165.

government' had acquired a definite meaning, namely, a parliamentary form of government, and in his view it was unwise to graft parliamentary democracy on India.[1]

In India the political situation had meanwhile further deteriorated. The internment of Mrs. Besant in June 1917 had led to a country-wide agitation. The publication of the Report of the Mesopotamian Commission at the end of June, containing severe strictures on the Government of India for its lack of judgment and administrative efficiency, had dealt another blow to its prestige. The debate in the Commons on the Report on 12 July 1917 turned out to be a censure motion on the Government of India. Montagu, in a bitter and impassioned speech, described the Government of India as 'too wooden, too iron, too inelastic, too antediluvian', 'illogical and indefensible', and pleaded for a more responsible and democratic administration. He outlined his vision of future India as 'a series of self-governing provinces and principalities, federated by one central government' and remarked: 'But whatever be the object of your rule in India, the universal demand of those Indians whom I have met and corresponded with is that you should state it.' 'The history of this war shows,' Montagu went on, 'that you can rely upon the loyalty of the Indian people to the British Empire - if you ever before doubted it! If you want to use that loyalty you must take advantage of that love of country which is a religion in India, and you must give them that bigger opportunity of controlling their destinies, not merely by councils which cannot act, but by

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1. Ibid. pp.164-5.

control, by growing control, of the executive itself.'[1]

Chamberlain resigned on 14 July 1917 and on the 18th, to the surprise of many, Montagu was appointed as Secretary of State for India. The appointment was wildly greeted in India and gave rise to over-optimism. It horrified certain Conservative circles in England. Even the sober Times called it 'a blunder' and 'an unfortunate selection'.[2] Both this over-optimism and this dislike were to be unfortunate elements in the Indian situation in the years to come.

Recognising 'the gravity and urgency of the situation' in India, the Viceroy repeatedly impressed upon the Home Government the view that, whatever be the decision regarding the nature and extent of future reforms, 'it would be fatal to put off any longer an unmistakable declaration in India of our future policy'.[3] Montagu energetically took up the threads from where Chamberlain had left them. On 7 August 1917 he still pleaded with the Prime Minister: 'You can save India. You can set your foot, and force England to set its foot, firmly on a path of progress on democratic lines.....'[4] Montagu's draft of the declaration was substantially the same as proposed earlier by Chamberlain, and read as follows:

'His Majesty's Government and the Government of India have in view the gradual development of free institutions in India with a view to ultimate self-government within the Empire'[5]

1. 95 H.C. Deb.5s., coll 2202-10.
2. The Times, 18 July 1917.
3. 26 H.L.Deb.5s., col.768; 31 H.L.Deb.5s., col.597.
4. F. Owen, The Tempestuous Journey, p.416.
5. Ronaldshay, The Life of Lord Curzon, vol.iii,p.167.

This, however, did not satisfy Curzon. He devoted a good deal of time and thought to its phraseology. In order to make it 'rather safer and certainly nearer to (his) own point of view', he redrafted it as follows on the eve of its publication:

'The policy of His Majesty's Government, with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of administration, and the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.'[1]

It was this declaration of policy which Montagu repeated in the Commons on 20 August 1917 in reply to a question from Charles Roberts. He also declared that substantial steps in that direction would be taken as soon as possible and that he would be proceeding to India shortly to discuss matters with the Government of India and receive representations from Indians. 'I would add, 'Montagu went on, 'that progress in this policy can only be achieved by successive stages. The British Government and the Government of India on whom the responsiblity lies for the welfare and advancement of the Indian peoples, must be the judges of the time and measure of each advance , and they must be guided by the cooperation received from those upon whom new opportunities of service will thus be conferred, and by the extent to which it

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1. Ibid. pp.167-8.

is found that confidence can be reposed in their sense of responsibility.'[1]

The Significance of the Announcement

'This announcement of policy,' remarked its author, 'not at all challenging, couched in most moderate and certainly in well-thought out terms', was 'the result of prolonged correspondence with the Government of India, of close and repeated examination at home, and of an amount of labour which I can imagine must rarely have been expended upon a public announcement'. There was not in it, he claimed, 'any definite drawing up of a programme, any sketch of what exactly was to be done'; it was merely 'a broad declaration of principle, and the lines upon which.....our administration of that country ought to proceed in the future'.[2] But what was the 'principle' and what were 'the lines' of advance which Curzon had in mind? What was really his intention in substituting the phrase 'responsible government' for 'self-government' in the proposed declaration? We can do no more than guess, for Curzon never opened his mind to the public on these points, and his official biographer finds it 'tossing painfully in a sea of indecision' and 'extremely difficult to understand'.[3] Curzon was anxious to make the announcement as safe, indefinite and non-committal as possible. But by the introduction of that phrase 'responsible government' he definitely and irrevocably committed Great Britain at least

1. 97 H.C.Deb.5s., coll. 1295-6.
2. 26 H.L.Deb.5s., col. 787; 31 H.L. Deb.5s., col.864.
3. Ronaldshay, The Life of Lord Curzon, vol.iii, pp. 166ff.

on one point - the policy of introducing parliamentary self-government in India on the English model. No sooner was the announcement made than public opinion, both in India and England, tended to fasten on that well-known term, and it was recognised on all hands that technically and historically it meant a government responsible to the elected representatives of the people. When, therefore, Curzon later took fright at the proposals of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report and accused them of attempting 'to lay the foundations of a parliamentary system in India' which would 'lead by stages of increasing speed to the dissolution of the Empire', Montagu was justified in pointing out that the charge should be more properly laid at the door of the announcement itself.[1] Lord Selborne considered the announcement of 20 August 1917 to be 'unfortunately worded' for it bound the British Government to the establishment of parliamentary government in India on the English or the Dominion model.[2]

The announcement laid down definitely and clearly the ultimate aim of British rule in India. It recognised India to be potentially a Dominion. 'In this pronouncement,' wrote Curtis, 'the goal prescribed for India is identified with that already attained by the self-governing Dominions'.[3] The long phrase 'the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire' was, as Professor Coupland remarked, 'a terse and accurate description

1. Ibid. pp.169-74.
2. 37 H.L.Deb. 5s., col.1005.
3. Curtis, Dyarchy, p.362.

of the rise of the self-governing Colonies to Dominion Status'.[1] Lloyd George's testimony should be conclusive on this point, for he presided over the Government and the Imperial Cabinet which sanctioned the terms of the declaration of 1917. He admitted in 1929 that it was decided by the Imperial War Cabinet in 1917 that 'there should be accorded to the people of India a considerable measure of self-government' and 'that gradually, if the experiment were successful,...we would extend it until India ultimately enjoyed full partnership in the Empire on equal terms with our great Dominions'.[2]

Progress towards the goal was, however, to be gradual, by successive stages. The British Government and the Government of India were to be the judges of the time and measure of each advance, and they were to be guided by the cooperation received from Indians and the extent to which confidence could be reposed in their sense of responsibility. In this respect, the declaration was a conditional pledge, but a pledge none the less, binding, as Curzon put it, 'not only upon Government but upon Parliament and upon the country'.[3]

In spite of all the great care and caution bestowed upon the drafting of the declaration, it was inaccurate on two points. It spoke of India yet its policy was meant to apply only to British India. It spoke of 'the British Government and the Government of India, on whom the responsibility lies for the welfare and advancement of the Indian peoples'

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1. Coupland, The Indian Problem, p.54.
2. 231 H.C.Deb. 5s., col. 1316.
3. 37 H.L.Deb. 5s., col. 1039.

and who 'must be the judges of the time and measure of each advance', while constitutionally speaking this responsibility and authority belonged only to Parliament. Both these inaccuracies were rectified when the Act was passed in 1919.

The declaration of 1917 was not only 'the most momentous utterance ever made in India's chequered history',[1] it was also 'a landmark in British Imperial history'.[2] It marked the definite repudiation of the concept of 'the two empires' - the concept that there could be 'under the British flag, one form of constitutional evolution for the West and another for the East, or one for the white races and another for the non-white'. On 16 February 1788 Burke had protested against what he called 'a plan of geographical morality, by which the duties of men in publick and in private situations, are not to be governed by the relation to the great Governour of the Universe, or by their relation to mankind, but by climates, degrees of longitude, parallels not of life but of latitudes'.[3] The announcement of 1917 did away with the geographical morality of Imperial policy. It marked the passing away of the Second Empire and the beginning of what Zimmern called, 'the Third British Empire';[4] the transformation, in principle, of the Empire into a Commonwealth of Nations.

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1. Cd. 9109, p.5.
2. A. Zimmern, The Third British Empire, p.14.
3. Burke, Works, vol.xiii, pp. 154-56. Opening speech in the impeachment of Warren Hastings.
4. Zimmern, op.cit. p.3.

PART II

INDIAN POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE COMMONWEALTH, 1917 - 29.

CHAPTER III

THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

Indian Reactions to the Montagu Declaration

The announcement of 20 August 1917 was universally welcomed in India not merely because it contained an authoritative declaration of British policy which Indian nationalists had demanded, but more so because the man who made it was considered to be a champion of India's demand for self-government. 'We recognise in Mr. Montagu,' wrote the Bengalee, commenting on the announcement, 'the friend of India and of the aspirations for liberty and constitutional freedom, as equal subjects of the Crown, which are now throbbing in our hearts.'[1] The cold and cautious phraseology of the announcement, however, aroused some apprehension and was attributed to the influence of Tories like Curzon and Milner in the Cabinet. The claim that the British Government and the Government of India were to be the sole judges of the time and measure of each advance was resented. It was hoped and asserted, on the contrary, that the people of India should have an effective voice in the matter. The Amrita Bazar Patrika also demanded that 'a definite declaration as to the nature of responsible government proposed and the time at which it would be con - ferred should be made without delay'.[2]

The Hopes and Fears of the Congress

When Montagu reached India in November 1917 the Congress submitted to him and the Viceroy a memorandum containing

1. The Bengalee, 22 August 1917.
2. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, 22 August 1917.

its demands. The memorandum provides the best clue to the understanding of the mind of contemporary nationalist India. It expressed satisfaction and gratitude for the declaration of British policy in India, but hinted at the element of uncertainty as to the future steps and objected to the decision with regard to them being left exclusively to the Governments of India and Great Britain. It demanded an assurance that successive steps in the direction of self-government would be taken 'at regular intervals not far removed from one another' and that 'each instalment of reform (would) be a substantial one'.[1] 'Where is the guarantee, it is asked,' said the memorandum, 'by Indians who have a painful experience of imperfectly redeemed pledges and half-fulfilled promises, that a great effort may not again be necessary for them to induce a future Government to make the next forward move?'[2] The memorandum suggested that either a section should be inserted in the Government of India Act or a Royal proclamation issued making it definite and certain that a steadfast endeavour would be made to reach the appointed goal 'within a reasonable space of time' and that at stated intervals the progress made would be reviewed 'by a competent and impartial authority - say a joint committee of the two Houses of the British Parliament - and the next step taken, the whole journey being completed in about 25 years!'.[3]

The memorandum demanded for India a position of equal-

1. Congress Memorandum, p.14.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid. p.15.

ity with the Dominions. The position of a mere dependency, it said, was wounding to the self-respect of a proud and ancient people who were heirs to a great civilisation. It pointed out that the events of the last two years had added an element of urgency which necessitated 'their insistence upon the elevation of their country to a status of equality with the Dominions in all inter-Imperial matters'.[1] 'It has become clear that the latter will in future have a potent voice in the settlement of Imperial problems. They are no longer to be in the position of daughter-states; they are referred to as sister-states, forming with Britain the five nations of the Commonwealth. If, as some writers suggest, a Parliament and (or) a Council of the Empire should be established with representation therein of the United Kingdom and the Dominions, and if all affairs of the Empire are to be disposed of by them (it), the present House of Commons and the House of Lords concerning themselves exclusively with the affairs of Britain, it is obvious that there will result the governance of India by the Dominions in conjunction with Britain.'[2] The memorandum warned that Indians would offer a most resolute resistance to any such development, for even if the attitude of the Dominions towards them were unexceptionable, Indians would never agree to the widening of the area of subjection. It asserted that if the fabric of the Empire was to be refashioned on some such lines, the indispensable condition from the Indian standpoint was that India should be represent-

1. Ibid. p.15.
2. Ibid. p.15.

ed in any projected Imperial Council or Parliament by elected members, the extent of India's representation being determined by the same criteria as might be applied to the Dominions. The memorandum demanded that even if no such far-reaching changes were to take place, India's representatives in the Imperial Conference should be chosen by the elected members of the central and provincial legislatures.[1]

The memorandum affirmed that the claim of Indians for eventual self-government rested 'on more grounds than one'. 'Above and beyond everything is the natural right of every people, inherent and inalienable, to be in their country what other peoples are in their native lands. It is their birth-right, and their very self-respect and the honour of their nation demand its unflinching assertion.'[2] This by itself, it added, should be an all-sufficient reason with the British people, whose whole history was an inspiration to others aspiring to be free, who had a passionate love for liberty and who were making such sacrifices in the cause of justice and freedom in the present war.

The memorandum avowed 'India's fidelity to England', but pointed out that, more than the gratitude for past and present benefits, it was the hope of achieving self-government with her help which was the secret of that attachment.[3]

Similar sentiments were voiced at the annual session of the Congress held at Calcutta towards the end of December

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1. Ibid. pp.15-6.
2. Ibid. p.17
3. Ibid.

1917. The main demands made at this session were: a definition of the term 'responsible government'; the fixation of a time-limit for the achievement of complete self-government; the enactment of the Congress-League scheme as the first step; an effective voice for the people of India in the determination of future steps; and a status of equality for India with the Dominions.[1]

The Congress and the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms:

The Congress met in a special session at Bombay towards the end of August 1918 to consider the reform proposals contained in the Montagu-Chelmsford Report and pronounced them 'disappointing and unsatisfactory'. It demanded, among other things, the introduction of dyarchy in the central government; the transfer of all subjects, except law, police and justice, to responsible government in the provinces; 'the declaration of the rights of the people of India as British citizens'; the same measure of fiscal autonomy (for India) which the self-governing Dominions of the Empire possess'; and a statutory guarantee that 'full responsible government should be established in the whole of British India within a period not exceeding 15 years'.[2]

When the Congress met for its annual session in December 1918 at Delhi, the war had ended. It reiterated the demands made at the special session at Bombay and in one respect went even further. Yielding to the pressure of

1. Report of the thirty-second Indian National Congress, 1917.
2. Report of the special session of the Indian National Congress, Bombay, 29 August - 1 September 1918, Appendix, pp.i-vi.

public opinion in India, the Congress urged that full responsible government be granted to the provinces at the very outset. The pronouncements of President Wilson and Lloyd George about self-determination had added another weapon to the armoury of Indian nationalists. The Congress demanded that the principle of self-determination should be applied to India also; and that as the first step towards the practical application of that principle Parliament should pass an Act 'which will establish at an early date complete responsible government in India, and when complete responsible government shall be thus established, the final authority in all internal affairs shall be the Supreme Legislative Assembly, as voicing the will of the Indian nation'.[1] The Congress further resolved 'that in the reconstruction of the Imperial policy, whether in matters affecting the inner relations of the nations constituting it, in questions of foreign policy, or in the League of Nations, India shall be accorded the same position as the self-governing Dominions'.[2] The Congress also urged that 'in justice to India it should be represented' 'to the same extent as the self-governing Dominions' by elected representatives at the Peace Conference, and 'in view of the shortness of time and in anticipation of the request made..... being acceded to by His Majesty's Government' elected as its representatives, Tilak, Gandhi and Hassan Imam.[3]

The shadow of Amritsar (had) lengthened over the fair

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1. Report of the thirty-third Indian National Congress, 1918, Appendix A, pp. vi - vii.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid. p.vii.

face of India'[1] in 1919; the Muslims were uneasy about the probable fate of Turkey; but the Congress responded loyally and gallantly to the spirit of the Royal proclamation of 23 December 1919. Though it judged the Act of 1919 to be 'inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing', the Congress decided to work it 'so as to secure an early establishment of full responsible government'.[2]

The Character of the Congress till 1919

Going through the proceedings of the Congress sessions during the years 1917-19 to-day, one doubts whether the Congress deserved the abusive epithets 'extremist' and 'revolutionary' which its critics in India and England hurled at it. The presidents of these sessions were loyal, respectable, sensible and moderate persons.[3] The Congress still gave pride of place to the loyalty resolution in its proceedings. Its tone was respectful of royalty, the British people and Parliament. It never expressed any desire to break away from the British Empire. In fact some of the speeches in these sessions might compare favourably with those of the pre-war years in their gushing loyalty and warm attachment to the Throne. Not satisfied with passing a resolution 'loyally congratulating' His Majesty the King-Emperor on the successful termination of the war, the 1918 Congress decided to present 'an address of congratulation' to him and 'a petition to the High Court of

1. The Duke of Connaught, 9 February 1921; Legislative Assembly Debates, 1921, vol.i, pt.1,p.17.
2. Report of the thirty-fourth Indian National Congress,1919, p.176.
3. Mrs. Besant (Calcutta 1917); Hassan Imam (Bombay Special Session 1918); M.M.Malaviya (Delhi 1918); Motilal Nehru

Parliament in England enunciating our demand for responsible government'.[1] The Amritsar Congress at the end of 1919 tendered 'its respectful thanks to His Majesty the King-Emperor for His gracious proclamation', welcomed the announced visit of the Prince of Wales and assured him of 'a warm reception by the people of this country'.[2] Howsoever much the Congress might have differed in the manner of expressing its dissatisfaction with the reforms, the modifications it urged hardly differed from those suggested by the Moderates. If anything the Congress voiced more correctly the feelings of the politically-minded classes in India than the Moderates who concealed their dissatisfaction in a thick fog of make-believe oratory. Moderatism can err as grievously in politics as its opposite and it may well be argued whether the Indian Moderates, by plumping for the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, did not mislead the British Government in the matter of Indian opinion with regard to those reforms. By their precipitate defection from the Congress in 1918, the Moderates certainly contributed something towards making that organisation 'extremist' in later years. Till 1919, however, the Congress had not gone 'extremist' or 'revolutionary'. A change had undoubtedly been coming over the Congress. The events and ideas of the war had made their impact. The iron of Jallianwalla had entered into its soul. It now took its stand on the natural and inalienable right of all men to be free, and on the principle of

1. Report of the thirty-third Indian National Congress, 1918, Appendix A, p.ix.
2. Report of the thirty-fourth Indian National Congress, 1919, p.173.

self-determination. But it still urged the British Parliament to recognise and apply the principle of self-determination to India. Strange self-determination indeed! It demanded a declaration of the rights of the Indian people, but as 'British citizens', as 'Indian subjects of His Majesty' - to be made by 'the Imperial Parliament'. The 'full' and 'complete responsible government' which the Congress wished to be established in India at an early date did not yet go beyond 'all internal affairs'. Nor should it be forgotten that till the beginning of 1920 the Congress was committed to strict constitutionalism and to the policy of working the reforms faithfully.

It was the events of the next few months - the Treaty of Sevres, the Hunter Commission Report, the approval of General Dyer's action by a strong element in the House of Commons and a majority of the House of Lords, and the immense public subscription raised for him - which acted as a catalyst. Before Gandhi transformed the Congress in 1920, he was himself to undergo a profound transformation.

A Loyalist Turns Rebel:

Gandhi began his political career in South Africa in the 1890's as a convinced and pronounced believer in the excellence of the British constitution and the value of the British connection. The secret of his loyalty to the Empire was his belief that the British constitution recognised, in principle if not always in fact, the equality of all races, and that it was possible for Indians to grow to their full stature within and with the help of the Empire. In spite of

his unhappy experiences in South Africa, Gandhi never wavered in this faith. He hoped that by loyal service and sacrifice his countrymen would qualify for equal partnership in the Empire. He himself served with distinction in the Zulu rebellion and the Boer War on the side of the English. In 1908 he came out openly in support of the methods and ideals of moderate Congressmen and denounced those of the extremists.[1] Gandhi was extremely critical of many aspects of Western civilisation, but he genuinely loved the English people and admired many aspects of their character. His beau ideal was Gokhale[2] and though his methods differed considerably from Gokhale's he ever retained the stamp of his master's personality.

Throughout the period of the First World War Gandhi laboured strenuously in the cause of the defence of the Empire. He preached 'absolutely unconditional and wholehearted cooperation with the Government on the part of educated India' in the war effort and emphasised what he considered to be the 'elementary truth' that if the Empire perished with it would perish their cherished aspirations.[3] He disappointed Mrs. Besant when he refused to join her in starting the Home Rule League in India. He told her, in so many words, that he did not share her distrust of the British people and would not do anything to embarrass them during the war.[4]

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1. Gandhi, Hind Swaraj.
2. 'A Confession of Faith', Young India, 13 July 1921.
3. Gandhi, Speeches and Writings, pp.441-5.
4. K.Dwarkadas, Gandhiji through My Diary Leaves, pp.10-1.

While Besant, Tilak and Jinnah were busy popularising the gospel of Home Rule Gandhi insisted on 'ungrudging and unequivocal support to the Empire'. He would have liked his countrymen to 'withdraw all the Congress resolutions and not whisper 'Home Rule' or 'responsible government' during the period of the war'.[1] In a letter to Jinnah on 4 July 1918, requesting him to make an emphatic declaration regarding recruitment, Gandhi remarked: 'Seek ye first the recruiting office and everything will be added unto you.'[2] Montagu while in India noted in his Diary after an interview with Gandhi: '(Gandhi) does not understand details of schemes. He wants the millions of India to leap to the assistance of the British throne.'[3]

In spite of the ill-timed Rowlatt Act and the unfortunate Jallianwalla Bagh incident Gandhi pleaded for working the Act of 1919. 'The Reforms Act,' he wrote, 'coupled with the Proclamation is an earnest of the intention of the British people to do justice to India.'[4] He advised his countrymen not to subject the reforms to carping criticism but to settle down quietly to work so as to make them a thorough success and thereby qualify for further advance. At the Amritsar Congress towards the end of December 1919, the latter-day apostle of non-cooperation would not even brook the idea of grudging acceptance or Irish obstructionism which Tilak and C.R.Das contemplated to practise in the councils. 'I shall challenge that position,' he remarked, 'I shall go across from one end

1. Gandhi, Speeches and Writings, pp.436-40.
2. D.G.Tendulkar, Mahatma, vol.i, p.282.
3. Montagu, An Indian Diary, p.58.
4. 'The Royal Proclamation', Young India, 31 December 1919.

of India to the other and say we shall fail in our culture, we shall fall from our position if we do not respond to the hand that has been extended to us.'[1] He also made the Congress pass a resolution condemning the excesses committed by the Indian mobs in the Punjab and Gujerat. The events of the next few months, however, turned the great loyalist and cooperator into a rebel and a non-cooperator.

The terms of the Treaty of Sèvres were considered by Indians - not only Muslims - as a breach of earlier solemn pledges given by British statesmen. The Hunter Report appeared to them to whitewash the culprits in the Amritsar incident. The manner in which General Dyer's action was acclaimed by the general body of Europeans in India and their friends in England filled Indians with pain and indignation. Gandhi pleaded with the authorities to put themselves morally right, but the latter failed to appreciate the moral aspect of the issues involved. Gandhi became convinced that the present representatives of the Empire had become 'dishonest and unscrupulous', that they had no real regard for the wishes of the Indian people and counted the honour of India as of little consequence.[2] To an enraged and aggrieved people he suggested the way of non-violent non-cooperation to enforce the national will and secure redress of the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs. The non-cooperation movement was launched on 1 August 1920. A special session of the Congress held at Calcutta in September 1920 approved and

1. Report of the thirty-fourth Indian National Congress, 1919, p. 123.
2. Young India, 28 July 1920.

adopted Gandhi's programme and affirmed that 'the only effectual means to vindicate national honour and prevent repetition of similar wrongs in future (was) the establishment of Swaraj'.[1]

Change in the Congress Creed

The special session of the Congress held at Calcutta in September 1920 also appointed a committee to revise the constitution of the Congress. The draft report of this committee recommended that the goal of the Congress should be the attainment of Swaraj by all peaceful and legitimate means. Commenting on the draft constitution in Young India on 3 November 1920, Gandhi remarked that the altered creed represented 'the exact feeling of the country at the present moment' and was 'but an extension of the original'. As long as no break with the British connection was attempted, it was, he claimed, strictly within even the existing creed. The extension lay, he pointed out, in the contemplated possibility of a break with the British connection. 'In my humble opinion,' Gandhi wrote, 'if India is to make unhampered progress, we must make it clear to the British people that, whilst we desire to retain the British connection, if we can rise to our full height with it, we are determined to dispense with it, and even to get rid of that connection, if that is necessary for full national development. I hold that it is not only derogatory to national dignity, but it actually impedes national progress surreptitiously to believe that our progress towards our goal is impossible without the British connection. It is this superstii-

1. Tendulkar, Mahatma, vol.ii,p.7.

tion which makes some of the best of us to tolerate the Punjab wrong and the Khilafat insult. This blind adherence to that connection makes us feel helpless. The proposed alteration in the creed enables us to rid ourselves of our helpless condition.'[1]

The Congress debated the question at its Nagpur session in December 1920. Gandhi moved the main resolution in the Subjects Committee on 27 December. It read: 'The object of the Indian National Congress is the attainment of Swaraj by the people of India by all legitimate and peaceful means.'[2] Radical opposition within the Congress found vent in an amendment, moved by Alekar, demanding that the object of the Congress should be 'the establishment of an Indian Republic' 'to be achieved by all just and effective means'.[3] The moderates, led by Malaviya and Jinnah, desired the Congress to be committed to Swaraj 'within the British Commonwealth.'[4] An overwhelming majority in the Subjects Committee, however, favoured Gandhi's draft. An illuminating discussion took place the next day, 28 December 1920, in the open session of the Congress. Gandhi defined his position clearly. 'I do not for one moment suggest,' he remarked, 'that we want to end the British connection at all costs, unconditionally. If the British connection is for the advancement of India, we do not want to destroy it. But if it is inconsistent with our national self-respect,

1. 'The Congress Constitution', Young India, 3 November 1920.
2. The Times of India, 29 December 1920.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

then it is our bounden duty to destroy it.'[1] He pointed out that the new creed was elastic enough to include both those who, like himself, believed that by retaining the British connection they could purify themselves and purify the British people, and those who had no such belief.

Lajpat Rai pointed out that the change in the Congress creed was an announcement in the clearest possible terms of the change in mentality which had come over the country. The Congress could not exclude from its ranks those patriots who had conscientious objection to signing the existing creed or those who believed in complete independence outside the British Empire. He did not think that the majority of Congressmen or of thinking people in the country were prepared to say that they would at once go in for complete independence or that they would not remain within the British Commonwealth if it were possible for them to do so honourably. The change in the creed, he remarked, was 'a notice to the British public and the British Government that although we do not at the present aim, directly aim, to go out of this British Empire, or, what we may call the British Commonwealth, but if we remain in the British Commonwealth we shall not remain at the dictation of anybody or by fear. We shall remain there by our own free choice and free will'. India, Lajpat Rai said, would decide when the time came whether she could remain a member of the British Commonwealth on terms of equality. He did not think that such a Commonwealth yet existed. 'As to the British Empire,' he added, 'I would rather be a slave

1. Report of the thirty-fifth Indian National Congress, 1920,

than willingly consent to be a part of an empire which enslaves so many millions of human beings.' He emphasised that the word Swaraj had been left unqualified deliberately for the purpose of enabling them to remain within the Commonwealth if they chose when a real Commonwealth had been established, or to go out if they so desired.[1]

Left-wing opposition to Gandhi's resolution had exhausted itself in the Subjects Committee, but the right-wingers did not fail to register their protest again in the open session. Jinnah opposed the change in the creed mainly on two grounds: that it was virtually a declaration of independence and as such inopportune; and that the means chosen for its achievement were inadequate. The resolution, he said, was nothing but 'a declaration of complete independence'; it was a 'camouflage' to leave the word Swaraj undefined. 'Is it possible,' he asked, 'for any man after this creed is passed to stand on the same platform - one saying that he wants to keep the British connection and another saying that he does not.' The majority in the nation may have the will to declare for independence, but they had not, in his view, yet the means to carry it out. 'You will never get your independence without bloodshed,' Jinnah warned, and added, 'You are exposing your hand to your enemies.' He assured his audience that his 'only reason' in opposing the proposition was that it was 'not the right step to take at this moment'. Jinnah also objected to the limitation in methods by which Swaraj was to be

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1. Ibid. pp. 49-54.

achieved: 'Non-cooperation by legitamate and peaceful methods may be an excellent weapon for the purpose of bringing pressure upon the Government. But let me tell you once more that the weapon will not succeed in destroying the British Empire. I therefore object to the methods, because if you want complete independence let us not be limited to methods.'[1]

Col. Wedgwood, who, along with Ben Spoor and Holford Knight, attended the Nagpur session, deplored the change of creed on the ground that it might make the union between the Congress and the Labour Party more difficult, if not impossible.[2]

From moderate Madras came two amendments seeking to define Swaraj as 'full responsible government' similar to that enjoyed by the self-governing Dominions of the British Empire. The mover of one of these amendments, S.Satyamurti, referred to the remark of Sir Robert Borden (?) that 'If Canada tomorrow declares her independence, not one British gun should be fired against her'.[3] Satyamurti pointed out that India could attain the same status as the Dominions within the Empire and the right of secession if she so desired. The movers of both the amendments emphasised the need of not alienating friends in Great Britain.

The Congress, however, decided to follow Gandhi. When his resolution was put to the vote only 2, out of the 14,000 delegates, voted against it.[4]

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1. Ibid. pp.54-7.
2. Ibid. p.60.
3. Ibid. P.63. The speaker probably meant Bonar Law. For the latters's remark see 127 H.C.Deb.5s., col. 1125.
4. Ibid. pp.84-5.

The debate at Nagpur revealed clearly the trend of thought within the Congress about membership of the British Commonwealth. Freedom within the Empire if possible, but without if necessary had now come to be the objective of the Congress. It was not yet a repudiation of the British connection, or, as Jinnah thought, a declaration of complete independence. It was considered derogatory to national self-respect to make a fetish of the British connection and to insist that India must evolve within the Empire irrespective of the attitude of the British Government. The change in the creed was deemed necessary to give expression to the general wish of the rank and file which was either hostile or indifferent to the British connection, to distinguish the Congress objective from that of the Liberals, to enable those who, like Shaukat Ali, had 'suspended' their allegiance to the British Crown to continue staying within the organisation, and to assert India's right of self-determination. The word 'Empire' was disliked. It had become a term of abuse, meaning exploitation and enslavement. No speaker, however, declared himself against the idea of a true Commonwealth of nations; but it was felt that the British Empire was not yet such a Commonwealth. All agreed that India could not accept any inferior status within the Commonwealth and that she must have the right to opt out of it if she so chose. Even those who wanted India to strive for self-government within the Empire took it for granted that Dominion Status implied the right of secession. Believers in the British connection could combine

idealism with expediency in varying degree. It was easier, in their view, to attain self-government within the Empire; and freedom with union was to be preferred to freedom that might mean severance.

The Nagpur Congress was the largest so far held. The petit bourgeois mass flooded the session. The leaders would have gladly moved at a slower pace, but the crowd had taken the reins in its hands and drove the former.[1] At Nagpur the Congress broke definitely and decisively with the Moderates, but it was not yet a complete victory for the youthful radicals. As one of them commented later: 'Regarding both the goal and the means, the decision of the Nagpur Congress represented a golden mean between the right-wingers, like Pt. Malaviya and Mr. Jinnah, and the youthful left-wingers, who swamped the Congress for the first time in 1920. The latter desired the goal of the Congress to be complete independence to be attained by all possible means. Gandhi by virtue of his tremendous influence and popularity was able to keep them at bay.'[2]

Andrews and the Ideal of Complete Independence

During the days of the anti-partition agitation in Bengal, Aurobindo and Pal had raised the slogan of absolute autonomy and unqualified Swaraj for India. Its effect was electrifying but short-lived. After 1909 the cry of complete independence had almost died down. Aurobindo retired from politics and Pal became a convert to the idea of Imperial

1. 'The Congress', Young India, 5 January 1921.
2. Subhas Bose, The Indian Struggle, p.69.

federation. The Home Rulers never contemplated severance of the British connection. Montagu, while in India, noted in his Diary in November 1917 that 'revolutionary or not, loathing or not as they may do the Indian Civil Service, none of these Indians show any signs of wanting to be removed from connection with the British throne'.[1] Even that stormy petrel, Tilak, did not advocate Swaraj outside the British Empire. The manifesto of his Congress Democratic Party, which Tilak issued in April 1920, read: 'This party believes in the integration or federation of India in the British Commonwealth for the advancement of the cause of humanity and the brotherhood of mankind, but demands autonomy for India and equal status as a sister state with every partner in the British Commonwealth, including Great Britain.'[2] Gandhi's non-cooperation movement was certainly not conceived in a spirit hostile to the British connection. In the latter half of the year 1920, however, the demand for complete independence outside the British Empire began to gain strength in India. It was encouraged in part by the events which gave birth to the non-cooperation and Khilafat movements. It was inspired by the similar demand being made in Ireland and Egypt at the time. But it was an Englishman, C.F.Andrews, who did most to popularise the cry in India.

In September 1920 Andrews publicly declared that he saw no possible recovery of self-respect by Indians unless they

1. Montagu, An Indian Diary, p.58.
2. S.L.Karandikar, Lokmanya Balgangadhar Tilak, p.635.

attained complete independence from British domination.[1] During the next few months he deluged India with speeches, articles and pamphlets preaching the immediate need of independence for India outside the British Empire.[2] Andrews condemned the idea of self-government for India within the Empire as the product of a 'subservient mind'.[3] Future historians, he wrote, would find it hard to believe that Indians could have sunk so low in character as to boast that they were 'British subjects' and 'British citizens' at the very time when they were being treated like helots and outcastes in the British colonies. 'India was,' Andrews emphasised, 'already, for all practical purposes, outside the British Empire.'[4] The Colonials had 'ignominiously hurled India, by their savage exclusion laws and white race policies, outside the Empire'.[5] He denounced as 'ludicrously absurd'[6] the notion that a vast sub-continent could remain permanently tied to an island in the North Sea. He pointed out that India was a mother country herself and not a daughter community like the Dominions. She had no vital, intimate, organic relation with England. Race, language, climate, religion and culture - all differentiated India from England. She could not like Canada, Australia and New Zealand be assimilated to the British way of life. She could never in reality become 'an integ-

1. B. Chaturvedi and M.Sykes, Charles Freer Andrews, p.155.
2. Andrews, How India Can be Free; Indian Independence: The Immediate Need; The Indian Problem; The Only Way to Swaraj; The Claim for Independence: Within or Without the British Empire. See also his introduction to S.E.Stokes, The Failure of European Civilisation as a World Culture.
3. Andrews, The Claim for Independence, p.39.
4. Andrews, How India can be Free, p.10.
5. Ibid.
6. Andrews, The Claim for Independence, p.24.

ral part of the British Empire', 'which must always remain peculiarly and centrally British'.[1] Indians, wrote Andrews, 'were foreigners and must always remain foreigners in the midst of an Empire of kinsmen'.[2]

Andrews told Indians not to delude themselves with the hope that the British Empire would one day accord them an equal, honourable and self-respecting place within it. The colonial was more than ever determined to deny Indians equality and justice. And as to the English people, however much 'Home Rule within the Empire' might be substituted for the present autocratic administration, he 'was quite certain, as an Englishman, - knowing my countrymen, as no Indian could possibly understand them, - that there would always be some residuum of subjection in India's position, some remaining mark of dependence'.[3]

India's connection with England was, Andrews remarked, a result of brute conquest. It might have done some good at some stage, but subjection for a long time to a foreign yoke was the most potent cause of national degeneration. British rule in India, he affirmed, had now become a dead hand, which must be removed entirely and immediately if India was to have a natural and unfettered growth. India's orientation towards Great Britain and her dependence on the latter vitiated her whole life and culture. She could never be herself and regain her soul unless and until she was completely independent.

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1. Ibid. p.25.
2. Ibid. p.23.
3. Ibid. p.35.

Andrews also warned that by remaining within the Empire India would be running the risk of involvement in the wars of the Empire and assisting in the perpetuation of Western economic and financial vested interests.

Andrews believed that Indians did not need the sword in order to be free. If they only developed the will to be free and realised that it was shameful to assist the foreigner, the British Empire in India - he quoted Seeley in support of his thesis - would collapse in no time. He felt that the real revolution that was needed in India was in the minds of men. The slave mentality of the people themselves had to be changed. And this, he told Indians, could not be done unless they put before themselves the correct and ennobling ideal of independence outside the British Empire.

The case for India's independence outside the British Empire was never before or after presented with such convincing logic and telling eloquence as Andrews did in the years 1920-21. His preaching made a tremendous impression in India, not least on such alert young minds as that of Jawaharlal Nehru.[1] But there was one man in India who was not convinced by his logic and claimed to know Englishmen better. Gandhi wrote to his friend on 23 November 1920: 'In its present condition the English connection is hateful. But I am not as yet

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1. '.....it seemed to me not only to make an unanswerable case for independence but also to mirror the inmost recesses of our hearts. The deep urge that moved us and our half-formed desires seemed to take clear shape in his simple and earnest language.....It was wonderful that C.F. Andrews, a foreigner and one belonging to the dominant race in India, should echo the cry of our inmost being.' J.Nehru, An Autobiography, p.66.

sure that it must be ended at any cost.....The connection must end on the clearest possible proof that the English have failed to realise the first principle of religion, namely brotherhood of man.'[1] At the Nagpur Congress in December 1920 he expressed his dissent publicly from the views of Andrews.[2] In July 1921 he wrote in Young India about Andrews, 'who, unlike me, considers that there is no room in the British Empire for a self-respecting and self-governing India, and who expects that some day I shall myself be driven to that position'.[3] 'I am,' Gandhi added, 'differently constituted. I never give up hope as long as there is the least chance, and I have faith enough in the British people to feel that, whilst they will test our determination and strength to the uttermost, they will not carry it to the breaking point.'[4] As Gandhi sat listening to the fiery speech of Hasrat Mohani at the Ahmedabad Congress in December 1921, pleading for the declaration of complete independence as the goal of India, he remarked to Andrews, who was seated on the dais beside him, 'This is your shararat (mischief), Charlie.'[5] Andrews wrote in 1922: 'A short time before Mahatma Gandhi's arrest, when I was with him in Ahmedabad, he blamed me severely indeed for my lack of faith in the British connection and for my publicly putting forward a demand for complete independence. He said to me openly that I had done a great deal of mischief by such advocacy of

1. Chaturvedi and Sykes, op.cit. p.156.
2. Report of the thirty-fifth Indian National Congress, 1920, p. 47.
3. 'Indian Republic', Young India, 13 July, 1921.
4. Ibid.
5. Chaturvedi and Sykes, op.cit. p.179.

independence. If I interpret him rightly his own position at that time was this. He had lost faith in the British administration in India, - it was a satanic government. But he had not lost faith in the British constitution itself. He still believed that India could remain within the British Empire on the basis of racial equality, and that the principle of racial equality would come out triumphantly vindicated after the present struggle was over. Indeed, he held himself to be the champion of that theory, and the upholder of the British constitution.' 'I said to him,' Andrews added, 'It would almost seem as if you had more faith in my own countrymen than I have myself.' He said to me, 'That may be true,' - and I felt deeply his implied rebuke.'[1]

It was the strangest rebel the world had ever seen - a man who loved the English, had invincible faith in English character, and claimed to uphold the British constitution while waging non-violent war against it. The British Empire got the adversary it deserved. Though Gandhi's non-violent non-cooperation was a weapon he considered to be of universal application, when he used it against the English he knew that it was irresistible. 'An Englishman,' he told Andrews, 'never respects you till you stand up to him. Then he begins to like you. He is afraid of nothing physical; but he is mortally afraid of his own conscience if ever you appeal to it, and show him to be in the wrong. He does not like to be rebuked

1. The Indian Review, June 1922, p.366; Introduction to the Speeches and Writings of M.K.Gandhi, pp.xv - vi. (Natesan, 1922 edition).

for wrong-doing at first; but he will think it over, and it will get hold of him and hurt him till he does something to put it right.'[1]

The Demand for Independence outside the Empire

At the Ahmedabad session of the Congress in December 1921 Maulana Hasrat Mohani moved a resolution suggesting that the object of the Congress should be 'complete independence, free from all foreign control'.[2] He pointed out that the concept of Dominion self-government was not applicable to India as the latter was not a Dominion. He asserted that Britain would never willingly grant India self-government. He desired that they should place before themselves 'the highest ideal possible'. His main contention, however, was that the Khilafat question could not be solved without complete independence. 'So far as India alone is concerned,' he remarked, 'the Colonial form of self-government may suffice but so far as the Khilafat is concerned Swaraj can have only one meaning and that is complete independence. The Khilafat question is not possible of solution so long as British imperialism is not broken. The British will not retrace their steps from Iraq, Arabia, and the Jazirat-ul-Arab and the whole world will not be free from their domination so long as their imperialism is not broken.....The Colonial form of self-government would not solve the Khilafat question, but it would, on the other hand, go against the Khilafat for

1. Andrews, Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas, p.249.
2. Report of the thirty-six Indian National Congress, 1921, p.50.

this reason that it will strengthen British imperialism.'[1]

Those who supported Mohani's resolution emphasised that their goal should be clearly defined; that Colonial self-government was an impossibility both because Indians were not colonials and because the English would never willingly concede it; and that the only ideal consistent with their self-respect and position in the world was that of complete independence.[2]

Gandhi took Mohani and his supporters severely to task for 'raising a false issue' and 'throwing a bomb-shell in the midst of the Indian atmosphere'. He condemned 'the levity' with which the proposition had been taken up, for it showed 'a lack of responsibility'. He reminded them of their limitations, especially the lack of unity amongst the various communities in India, and warned them not to enter waters whose depths they did not know. 'Our creeds,' Gandhi remarked, 'are not such simple things like clothes which a man changes at will and puts on at will. They are creeds for which people die, for which people live for ages and ages. Our creed is an extensive creed. It takes the weakest and the strongest..... The limited creed of Maulana Hasrat Mohani does not admit the weakest of your brothers.'[3] He appealed to his audience to reject Mohani's proposition. And reject the Congress did with an overwhelming majority amidst shouts of 'Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai.'

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1. Ibid. pp.52-4, 59-60.
2. Ibid. pp.55-6.
3. Ibid. pp.57-8.

Writing in Young India on 5 January 1922 under the heading 'Independence', Gandhi returned to the theme again. The Maulana, he wrote, wanted to sever all connection with the British people even as partners and equals. It was theoretical to argue that the Khilafat question could not be solved without complete independence. If the British people remained hostile to the Islamic world, Gandhi warned, there would be nothing left for Indians but to insist upon complete independence. 'But assuming,' he argued, 'that Great Britain alters her attitude, as I know she will when India is strong, it will be religiously unlawful for us to insist on independence. For it will be vindictive and petulant. It would amount to a denial of God, for the refusal will then be based upon the assumption that the British people are not capable of response to the God in man. Such a position is untenable for both a believing Mussalman and a believing Hindu.' 'India's greatest glory,' Gandhi told his countrymen, 'will consist not in regarding Englishmen as her implacable enemies fit only to be turned out of India at the first available opportunity but in turning them into friends and partners in a Commonwealth of nations in place of an Empire based upon exploitation of the weaker or undeveloped nations and races of the earth and therefore finally upon force.'[1]

Gandhi and Swaraj

Gandhi was the supreme and unquestioned leader of India during the period of the non-cooperation movement - 1920-22.

1. Young India, 5 January 1922.

Not only was his word law unto his numerous followers, he also created a profound impression on the minds of those in India who did not always agree with him. It is worth while, therefore, to ascertain how he visualised Swaraj for India and the nature of her connection with the British Empire.

Gandhi repeatedly emphasised during these years that by Swaraj he meant 'the parliamentary government of India in the modern sense of the term'.[1] 'In so far as I can see,' he wrote in December 1920, 'Swaraj will be a parliament chosen by the people with fullest power over the finance, the police, the military, the navy, the courts, and the educational institutions .....Under that Swaraj, the nation will have the power to impose a heavy protective tariff on such foreign goods as are capable of being manufactured in India, as also the power to refuse to send a single soldier outside India for the purpose of enslaving the surrounding or remote nationalities.'[2] Gandhi, however, denied that he had any 'clear-cut scheme', or that any one man could produce such a scheme, for, as he put it, it was not one man's Swaraj that was wanted. All that he was doing, he said, was to lay down some 'broad outlines'. The actual scheme of Swaraj was to be 'framed by the authorised representatives of the nation' - freely elected through universal adult franchise.[3]

Gandhi was well acquainted with South African politics and his writings bristle with references to the examples and

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1. Young India, 29 December 1920.
2. Young India, 8 December 1920.
3. Young India, 16 February 1921, 19 January 1922, 23 February 1922.

precedents from the history of that country. And then, Irish history was a perennial source of inspiration to Indian nationalists, a running lesson in tactics and strategy. The conclusion of the treaty between Great Britain and Ireland on 6 December 1921 encouraged great hopes in India and led to the demand for the calling of a round table conference to settle the Indian question. The examples of South Africa and Ireland strengthened Gandhi's belief that India could attain Swaraj within the British Empire. On 5 January 1922 he wrote: 'Let us see clearly what Swaraj together with the British connection means. It means undoubtedly India's ability to declare her independence if she wishes. Swaraj therefore will not be a free gift of the British Parliament. It will be a declaration of India's full self-expression. That it will be expressed through an act of Parliament is true. But it will be merely a courteous ratification of the declared wish of the people of India even as it was in the case of the Union of South Africa. Not an unnecessary adverb in the Union scheme could be altered by the House of Commons. The ratification in our case will be a treaty to which Britain will be a party. Such Swaraj may not come this year, may not come within our generation. But I have contemplated nothing less.'[1]

Gandhi repeatedly pointed out during the years 1920-22 that by Swaraj he meant 'full responsible government on Dominion lines' or 'full Dominion Status' for India with freedom

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1. Young India, 5 January 1922. Also Young India, 15 December 1921, 19 January 1922.

to secede from the Empire.[1] As early as 22 September 1920 he had remarked: 'If it is to be partnership, it must be partnership at will.'[2] On 6 October 1920 he wrote: 'We must have absolute equality in theory and practice and ability to do away with the British connection.'[3] Again on 29 June 1921 he said: 'In a free Commonwealth, every partner has as much right to retire if the rest go wrong, as it is his duty to remain so long as the rest are faithful to certain common principles.'[4] From this position, that India must have full Dominion Status and the right to secede from the Empire if she so chose, Gandhi and the Congress did not depart in later years.

The Swarajists

The non-cooperation movement disintegrated almost immediately after Gandhi abruptly sounded the call to re - treat in February 1922 and after his own arrest in the following March. From the height of their exaltation, optimism and self-confidence, Congressmen swung to the depths of exhaustion, despair and agonising self-introspection. It was realised, almost with a tinge of regret, that in the heat of their righteous indignation Congressmen and Khilafatists had committed a grave blunder in boycotting the councils. If they had sought election in 1920, they would have obtained commanding majorities and they could have used that power either to dominate the political machine or to bring it to

1. Young India, 6 April 1921; 19 January, 23 February 1922.
2. Young India, 22 September 1920.
3. Young India, 6 October 1920.
4. Young India, 29 June 1921.

a standstill. There were also many within the Congress who had never fully believed in the Gandhian programme, but their scepticism had given way before the miracle-maker and they had found the current too strong for them. But now that the holy man was in the Yerveda prison, his following disspirited and disheartened, and his promised 'Swaraj in one year' as distant as ever, many realised the truth of Tilak's remark, 'Politics is a game of worldly people and not of Sadhus'.[1] And the worldly people felt the need of a more realistic campaign and decided to enter the legislatures.

The Swarajists represented the right wing of the Congress. They were constitutionalists at heart. They admitted that the non-cooperation movement had played a significant part in rousing the masses from their slumber and in creating a surge towards freedom, but they did not disguise from themselves the fact that it had failed to force the hands of the authorities. They pointed out that the country was in no mood for a further bout of non-cooperation and that instead of wasting their time in sulkiness it was advisable to utilise the councils for putting pressure on the authorities for a further constitutional advance. The battle for Swaraj was to continue, they said, only its form and weapons were to change in order to suit the circumstances of the country. To the followers of the Mahatma it was treason against their absent leader, the old moderate heresy rearing its ugly head within the Congress. They defeated the proposal made by C.R.Das and

1. Parvate, op.cit. p.524.

Motilal Nehru to enter the councils at the Gaya Congress towards the end of December 1922. Undaunted by this rebuff, the constitutionalists announced the formation of the Congress-Khilafat Swaraj Party on 1 January 1923. The manifesto of the new organisation declared that 'while the goal of the party (was) the attainment of Swaraj, the immediate objective of the party (was) the speedy attainment of full Dominion Status'.[1] What this latter objective signified was explained in the programme of the party published in February 1923. It meant, said the programme, 'the securing of the right to frame a constitution adopting such machinery and system as are most suited to the conditions of the country and the genius of the people'.[2] The same point was emphasised in the election manifesto of the party published on 14 October 1923.[3] A compromise was effected at the special session of the Congress held at Delhi in mid-September 1923 and the Swarajists were allowed to contest the elections to be held towards the end of the year. The Swarajists virtually routed the Liberals and gained impressive victories at the elections for both the provincial and central legislatures. They struck a working alliance with the Independents and came to the councils determined to force the hands of the Government to revise the Act of 1919.

The 'National Demand'

On 3 February 1924 a conference consisting of the

1. The Indian Annual Register, 1923, vol.ii, p.143.
2. Ibid. p.221.
3. Ibid. pp. 218-9.

Swarajists and the Independents held at Delhi passed a resolution, moved by Jinnah, asking the Government 'to take steps immediately for the establishment of full responsible government'.[1] By another resolution the conference proposed the appointment of a committee or a round table conference, consisting of the representatives of the various communities and interests in India, to consider and recommend measures for the establishment of full responsible government in India.[2] On 5 February 1924 a Labour Government came into office in England. This encouraged hopes of a liberal response to the demand which Indian nationalists had already decided to make in the Assembly. On 8 February 1924 Motilal Nehru introduced a motion in the Indian Legislative Assembly containing the so-called 'National Demand'. It urged the Governor-General in Council 'to take steps to have the Government of India Act revised with a view to establish full responsible Government in India and for the said purpose

(a) to summon at an early date a representative Round Table Conference to recommend with due regard to the protection of the rights and interests of important minorities the scheme of a constitution for India, and

(b) after dissolving the Central Legislature, to place the said scheme for approval before a newly elected Indian Legislature for its approval and submit the same to the British Parliament to be embodied in a Statute.'[3]

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1. The Indian Quarterly Register, 1924, vol.i, p.70.
2. Ibid. p.71.
3. Legislative Assembly Debates, 1924, vol.iv, pt.1, p.367.

Motilal made it clear that what he and his supporters inside the Assembly demanded was 'a complete overhauling of the Government of India Act'.[1] They were not asking, he said, 'for complete responsible government to be handed over to us tied up in a bundle', but that the British Government should recognise the right of Indians to self-determination and convene 'a round table conference, or committee, or whatever other name you may give it' to examine the entire problem of the future government of India.[2] 'We have come to ask you,' he remarked, 'to meet us so that we may put our heads together, to hear us and to let us hear you and then come to some definite conclusion.'[3] He wanted the proposed conference to be really representative - consisting of the representatives of the Government and of the various interests in the country. Such a conference, Motilal said, would afford 'an opportunity .....to the Government to right itself with the people, and to the people to right themselves with the Government', 'to restore old relations and to obliterate the sad memory of past events'.[4] 'We have come here,' he added, 'to offer our cooperation, non-cooperators as we are, if you will care to cooperate with us. That is why we are here. If you agree to have it, we are your men; if you do not, we shall, like men, stand upon our rights and continue to non-cooperate.'[5]

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1. Ibid. p.368.
2. Ibid. p.369.
3. Ibid. p.371.
4. Ibid. p.545.
5. Ibid. p.370.

For three days speaker after speaker on the non-official side in the Assembly emphasised the unanimity with which all sections of politically-minded India combined to demand immediate and substantial political advance. If the revision of the Act of 1919 was to take place either by a commission or a conference in cooperation with all the elements in the political life of India, this was perhaps the finest opportunity. All political parties in India were agreed that the Act of 1919 had exhausted its possibilities, that it was no use continuing whipping the dead horse of dyarchy, and that delay, instead of solving any problem or removing any one of the alleged numerous obstacles in the path of self-government, would only serve to estrange the two peoples. They demanded that immediate steps should be taken for a comprehensive settlement of the Indian problem, and that the Indian constitution should be placed on a permanent footing with provision for automatic advance towards full responsible government. The British Government and the Government of India, however, did not think that the time had yet arrived for such steps to be taken.[1] Their response, appointing a committee to inquire into the working of the Act of 1919, deeply disappointed even the moderate-minded Indians.

The Swarajists realised the weak position of the Labour Government - in office but not in power, and that, too, for the first time - and did not expect it to concede their demand

1. The attitude of the British Government and the Government of India is examined in Chapter VI.

wholesale, but they certainly did expect a more liberal response than they received from the party in England which had ever since the end of the war so enthusiastically supported India's claim for self-determination and self-government. Strangely enough, their hopes were revived when a strong Conservative Government came into power in England early in 1925. Some Swarajist leaders, especially C.R.Das, felt that it would be in a better position to end the political deadlock in India. They even expected the new Secretary of State, Lord Birkenhead, to repeat his performance in the settlement of the Irish question in 1921. In March 1925 Das came out with, what was widely considered in India to be, a generous offer of cooperation to the Government. He severely condemned methods of violence and expressed with almost poetic fervour his belief in the Commonwealth ideal. He discounted the possibility of resumption of civil disobedience and offered to cooperate with the Government if the latter showed a change of heart and assured that Swaraj would come automatically in the future.[1] The Swarajists made some other small gestures of peace to indicate that they were eager for reconciliation and cooperation.[2] Even Gandhi blessed their efforts. On Das's untimely death in June 1925 he appealed to the Government to respond to Das's sincere offer in a generous manner. 'Cannot this glorious death,' he wrote, 'be utilised to heal

1. P.C.Ray, Life and Times of C.R.Das, pp.247-56.
2. Motilal Nehru agreed to serve on the committee for considering ways and means of recruiting Indian officers for the army, and Vithalbhai Patel contested and won the election for the presidentship of the Assembly.

wounds and forget distrust' and added, 'May the fire, that burnt yesterday the perishable part of Deshbandu Das, also burn the perishable distrust, suspicion and fear.'[1] Gandhi even transferred all power to Motilal and merged the Congress into the Swaraj Party in order to support the latter's bid for settlement with the Government.

Lord Birkenhead's first statement in Parliament as Secretary of State for India on 7 July 1925 disappointed the Swarajists. He expressed his personal dislike of dyarchy but wanted Indians to work it. He asserted that the preamble to the Act of 1919 contained the 'permanent and static' policy of the British Government. He ridiculed the idea that India was an entity or a nation and declared that he was 'not able in any foreseeable future to discern a moment when we may safely, either to ourselves or India, abandon our trust'. But Birkenhead did hold out the prospect of an early appointment of the Statutory Commission if Indian leaders showed 'a sincere and genuine desire to cooperate with us in making the best of the existing constitution'.[2] In September 1925 Motilal put forward a motion in the Legislative Assembly reiterating the Swarajist demand of 1924.[3] But in two essential respects it was a further climb-down. The Swarajists expressed their willingness to accept a commission provided it was representative of the important elements in Indian political life. And secondly, in order to make it doubly

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1. Tendulkar, Mahatma, vol.II, p.255.
2. 61 H.L. Deb. 5s., coll.1069-92.
3. Legislative Assembly Debates, vol.vi, pt.II, pp.854-5.

clear that what they demanded was not immediate full responsible government, Motilal's motion specifically laid down that defence, political and foreign affairs were to remain reserved subjects for a fixed term of years.[1] No political party in India demanded less than this and the Swarajist motion was supported by almost all the elected members of the Assembly. The Government of India, however, could not see their way to accept the motion. Yet another chance of making politics in India run on constitutional lines was missed in 1925. The deadlock continued.

The situation as Irwin found it when he succeeded Reading as Viceroy in 1926 was described by him in a letter to Dawson: 'I am always racking my brain as to how to get out of this futile and vicious circle by which we say, no advance without cooperation, and they say no cooperation without advance. I cannot help feeling that it is a question much more psychological than political. One of the extreme Swaraj people said to me the other day that if only they could trust us it wouldn't matter to them whether they waited five or fifty years. How then to make them believe that we mean what we say?'[2] Irwin had put his finger on the root of the Indian problem. But it was too late. The Swarajists had already withdrawn from the councils in despair.

The Swarajists were eager to remain in the councils. They did not want to return to the fold of their critics in

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1. Motilal even said: 'Make us masters in our own home, but whatever else is outside the home and pertains more to your Imperial interests, you are welcome to keep'. Ibid. p.863.
2. Irwin to Dawson, 18 May 1926; The History of The Times, vol.iv, pt.II, p.863.

the Congress as repentant sinners. The non possumus attitude of the authorities drove them into ploughing the barren fields of non-cooperation and obstruction - the very thing which neither they nor the Government desired, Throughout the constitutional debates of 1924-25 no feelings inimical to the British connection were expressed in the Assembly. The tone of the Swarajists, though defiant, was one of earnest appeal to the authorities to help them evolve within the Empire in a constitutional manner. It was a Motilal, painfully con - scious of his defeat and humiliation, who walked out of the Assembly on 8 March 1926 saying: 'Sir, the cooperation we offered has been contemptuously rejected and it is time for us to think of other ways to achieve our object.' He meant, he said, 'no menace or threat', but was going out 'in all humility with the confession of our failure to achieve our object in this House on our lips' 'to devise those sanctions which alone can compel any government to grant the demands of the nation'.[1]

Swaraj: Within or Without the Empire?

At almost every session of the Congress, ever since 1920, some young enthusiasts moved a resolution demanding that the Congress should declare its goal to be complete independence outside the British Empire. The usual arguments with which we have become familiar were used in favour of it. But every time the Congress rejected the resolution with an overwhelming majority. There were many reasons why the

1. Legislative Assembly Debates, 1926, vol.vii, pt.III, pp.2137-43.

Congress refused to accept the proposed change. First and foremost was the influence of Gandhi, who incessantly emphasised that Swaraj within the Empire was preferable to that outside the Empire, and that it would be a greater triumph for the Congress to win freedom without severing the British connection. Secondly, the Congress was still dominated by the older group of nationalists, who, in spite of all their alleged radicalism, were cautious and conservative politicians. Though anxious for speedy attainment of self-government, they stood for ordered and peaceful progress. The British connection was something of a fetish with them. They even feared that a declaration of complete independence would give encouragement to violent and revolutionary activities in the country. The third important reason was, that the country was not, in their view, ready for such a change. Communal antagonism was becoming increasingly more bitter. The country was badly divided and demoralised. Even the Congress was a house divided against itself. The Swarajists and the pure Gandhi-ites were engaged in an acrimonious controversy over tactics. In 1923 a committee appointed by the Congress to examine what changes should be made in the Congress constitution had reported that while most Congressmen individually favoured the ideal of complete independence, they were opposed to any change in the existing creed of the organisation as it would narrow the Congress platform and introduce another element of controversy within its ranks.[1]

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1. The Indian Annual Register, 1923, supplement, p.114.

As long as Gandhi was in prison the opponents of change took shelter behind the authority of his name and views to foil the attempts of the 'Young Turks' within the Congress. Gandhi's first message to his countrymen on his release early in February 1924 was that they should regard Englishmen as their friends and not enemies, that their fight was against the system and not against the men administering it, and that in so far as they had failed to understand this distinction they had harmed their cause.[1] In his presidential address to the Belgaum Congress in December 1924 he clearly defined his attitude. 'The better mind of the world desires to-day,' he remarked, 'not absolutely independent states warring one against another, but a federation of friendly inter-dependent states. The consummation of that event may be far-off. I want to make no grand claim for our country. But I see nothing grand or impossible about our expressing our readiness for universal interdependence. It should rest with Britain to say that she will have no real alliance with India. I desire the ability to be totally independent without asserting the independence. Any scheme that I would frame, while Britain declares her goal about India to be complete equality within the Empire, would be that of alliance and not of independence without alliance.'[2] Gandhi urged Congressmen not to insist on independence in each and

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1. Tendulkar, Mahatma, vol.ii., p.166.
2. Report of the thirty-ninth Indian National Congress, 1924, p.26.

every case, not because there was anything impossible about it, but because it was wholly unnecessary 'If the British Government,' he argued, 'mean what they say and honestly help us to equality, it would be a greater triumph than a complete severance of the British connection.'[1]

During the years 1924-26 the Swarajists were knocking at the gates of the authorities for Dominion Status with reservations. They had struck a working alliance with other parties in order to put pressure on the Government to make a forward move. Even the impatient idealists within the Congress realised that it would be inexpedient to force a change in the Congress creed at this time, for it might mean wrecking the impressive unity which the Swarajists had been able to secure. Though some of the irresponsible and irrepressible sort amongst them continued formally to move resolutions at consecutive Congress sessions, it was nothing more than a gesture of protest and impatience. By the middle of 1926 it was evident that the Swarajists had failed. The Government had refused to be coerced. Even Dominion Status remained a dim, distant and doubtful prospect. The alliance of the Swarajists with other groups in the Assembly had broken down. Amongst the Swarajists themselves certain sections led by M.R.Jayakar, S.Moonje and M.M.Malaviya had swung round to what they called 'responsive cooperation' with the Govern - ment. Communal tension showed no signs of abatement. In the elections towards the end of 1926 the Swarajists suffered a

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1. Ibid.

set-back. The three years of the Swarajist experiment had been an unmitigated failure. A dangerous feeling of impatience gripped the younger and more radical elements within the Congress. If only the ideal were high enough, they thought, if only the fire of struggle burnt bright and fierce, all evil within the country would be consumed and all obstacles over-come. Socialistic and communistic ideas were gaining currency in India. Racial bitterness was increasing. The young were spoiling for a fight. The Congress, they felt, was degenerating into a debating society, only a shade different from the Liberals. The Swarajist heresy, they were convinced, had brought the Congress down to Babu politics; it must be eradicated.

At the Congress session held at Gauhati in December 1926 the radicals made a rather determined effort to get the Congress committed to complete independence and severance of the British connection. But once again Gandhi foiled their attempt. He asked the advocates of independence to tell him why they wanted the severance of the British connection. 'Have you got repugnance against the white skin?' he enquired.[1] When one of the separatists replied that the British would never grant India equality of status, Gandhi pointed out that that was totally different from rejecting British association on any terms. He accused the advocates of independence of lack of faith in human nature and in themselves. He told them that instead of thinking that the British would never undergo

1. The Times of India, 30 December 1926.

a change of heart it would be more honest to admit that there was no change of heart in the British because Indians were weak and undeserving. The Balfour Committee Report and General Hertzog's satisfaction with the results of the Imperial Conference of 1926 had added strength to Gandhi's elbow. He told the separatists that between Britain and the Dominions there was a partnership at will on terms of equality. 'Take the instance,' he remarked, 'of South Africa. There is that haughty nation, the Dutch Boers. Even they do not bring in such a resolution. General Hertzog has returned from London completely converted, knowing that if he wants to declare independence to-day, he can get it. I shall not be satisfied with any constitution that we may get from the British Parliament unless it leaves that power with us also, so that if we choose to declare our independence we could do so.'[1] In an article in Young India on 13 January 1927 Gandhi again chastised the advocates of independence and demolished their arguments more effectively.[2]

While Gandhi was busy trying to keep his unruly followers in check, the British Government offered the latter a real boon in the form of the Simon Commission of 1927. Amidst the atmosphere of universal indignation aroused in India by the appointment of an all-white Commission, the radical idealists, led by Jawaharlal, found it easy to make the Congress at its Madras session in December 1927 pass a resolution declaring 'the goal of the Indian people to be complete

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1. Ibid.
2. 'Independence', Young India, 13 January 1927.

national independence.'[1] It was their reply, they said, to 'the arrogant and insulting challenge' thrown down by Lord Birkenhead. The creed of the Congress, as defined by the constitution of 1920, remain unchanged, but the separatists had now unfurled their banner.

Gandhi [2] was very angry. He denounced the resolution as 'ill-conceived'.[3] 'Do men conceive their goals in order to oblige people and to resent their action?' he asked. 'My ambition,' he wrote, 'is much higher than independence. Through the deliverance of India, I seek to deliver the so-called weaker races of the earth from the crushing heels of Western exploitation in which England is the greatest partner. If India converts, as it can, Englishmen, it can become the predominant partner in a world Commonwealth of which England can have the privilege of becoming a partner if she chooses .....This is big talk I know. For a fallen India to aspire to move the world and protect weaker races is seemingly an impertinence. But in explaining my strong opposition to this cry for independence, I can no longer hide the light under a bushel. Mine is an ambition worth living for and worth dying for. In no case do I want to reconcile myself to a state lower than the best for fear of consequences. It is, therefore, not out of expedience that I oppose independence as my goal.'[4]

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1. The Indian Quarterly Register, 1927, vol.ii, pp.380-1.
2. Gandhi took no part in shaping Congress policy at the Madras session. He was absent from the meeting of the Working Committee which accepted Nehru's resolution. Motilal was away in England.
3. Tendulkar, Mahatma, vol.ii, p.402.
4. 'Independence versus Swaraj', Young India, 12 January 1928.

Dominion Status versus Independence

Ever since 1920 - if not earlier - Congressmen had been debating whether India should strive for Swaraj within or without the British Empire. Swaraj remained as distant as ever, but (or because of it?) the academic controversy over the ideal became increasingly sharper. For nationalism the banner is as important as the forward march. The 1927 Con - gress, in passing the resolution on independence, had done what Gandhi had so far successfully resisted - it had fixed an abstract label on the national struggle and turned that label into a test for patriots. Its unfortunate results were soon evident in India. Into that land of discord it introduced yet another element of fierce and passionate controversy. Throughout the succeeding two years India was torn by what came to be known as the Dominion-Status-versus- Independence controversy. It pursued the deliberations of the All-Parties Conference and even threatened to split the Congress. We can- not afford to follow the controversy in the various camps and in all its details and shall content ourselves with noting its essential features.

The 1927 session of the Congress at Madras, which declared 'the goal of the Indian people to be complete nation- al independence', also decided to cooperate with other polit - ical parties in India in order to frame a Swaraj constitution for the country. An All-Parties Conference was organised for this purpose. This Conference appointed a committee, presided over by Motilal Nehru, to draft a constitution for India. The

report of this committee - called the Nehru Report - recommended a constitution for India on the lines of the self-governing Dominions, drawing heavily on the Irish model. Only on the basis of the ideal of Dominion Status, said the Report, was 'the maximum degree of agreement obtainable amongst the parties in India'.[1] It, however, emphasised that Dominion Status was viewed 'not as a remote stage of our evolution but as the next immediate step'.[2] The advocates of independence opposed the ideal of Dominion Status at every stage of the deliberations of the All-Parties Conference. They even organised Independence Leagues to propagate their creed. The Nehru Report, while it accepted the ideal of Dominion Status as being 'the greatest common factor of agreement among the well recognised political parties in India',[3] had allowed any individual or party which believed in independence to work for it. Motilal and the older leaders of the Congress were anxious that the Congress should approve of the Report in toto if it was to carry any force behind it. In their view Dominion Status had 'come to mean something indistinguishable from independence except for the link with the Crown'.[4] Secondly, because 'the maximum degree of agreement was only obtainable on this basis'[5] Dominion Status was, in their view, preferable to a theoretically higher ideal of independence. Thirdly, in order that the precarious alliance with other

1. All-Parties Conference, 1928: Report of Committee, p.25.
2. Ibid. p.1.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid. p.25.

political groups in the country, especially the Liberals, might not be disrupted, and also in order that the Report might receive a sympathetic consideration from the authorities, it was considered prudent and safe not to aim too high.

The view-point of the 'Independence-wallahs' was best presented by Jawaharlal Nehru during the year 1928 from various platforms.[1] He condemned Dominion Status as a timid and uninspiring ideal. It could not be the rallying cry of a militant and revolutionary nationalism. Instead of encouraging the spirit of struggle, suffering and sacrifice, it damped that spirit where it existed and prompted men to seek the easy, sheltered paths of compromise and submission. The advocates of Dominion Status believed and encouraged others to believe that their objective could be won by sweet reasonableness and logic. This was a great delusion. The national demand would have to be backed by force, by sanctions devised through mass organisation and mass action. The votaries of Dominion Status retarded the cause of national freedom, instead of advancing it, for they encouraged the false belief that such sanctions were not necessary.

In attacking the ideal of Dominion Status, Jawaharlal in fact attacked the reformist psychology of the Liberals and of moderate Congressmen. He accused them of having no vision of a new India. Those who thought in terms of

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1. For the speeches of Jawaharlal Nehru in 1928 on the issue see R.Dwivedi, The Life and Speeches of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, pp.67-181; The Indian Quarterly Register, 1928, vol.i, pp.401 - 5, 416-20; The Indian Quarterly Register, 1928, vol.ii, pp.22, 33-5, 366, 437-8, 453, 458-64.

Dominion Status, he said, wanted only an Indianisation of administration - the substitution of the brown in place of the white rulers, while retaining intact the existing political, social and economic order. Independence stood, he claimed, for a new state and a new society - democratic and socialistic. Indians could not, he feared, do away with landlords, princes and capitalists while maintaining the British connection. He also feared that though Dominion Status might give India a larger measure of political liberty, it would keep her economically tied with a thousand strings to British capitalism.

Jawaharlal considered the very idea of a vast and ancient country like India remaining a Dominion of England to be ridiculous and humiliating. He did not believe in reforming imperialism by entering into a partnership with it. The British Commonwealth, in spite of its high-sounding name, he pointed out, did not stand for true international cooperation. It was an exclusive system whose membership would deprive India of the freedom to develop contacts with the world at large, especially with the other countries of Asia. He did not stand for a narrow, isolated nationalism, but he felt that a true commonwealth of nations could not grow out of the British Empire.

British foreign policy, especially as witnessed in Britain's dealings with countries in the Middle East and with China, came in for severe criticism at the hands of Indian nationalists. Jawaharlal denounced Britain as the greatest

enemy of national freedom, of disarmament and peace throughout the world. One of his great objections to Dominion Status was that it would mean the involvement of India in the reactionary foreign policy of Great Britain. As early as 1927-28 he had started feeling that imperialism was preparing for a war. He believed that a firm and unequivocal declaration on the part of India that she would not allow her man power and resources to be exploited for waging an imperialist war might have a restraining influence on British policy. He attacked the Nehru Report for postulating a joint foreign policy for India and Great Britain.

Jawaharlal considered Great Britain to be 'the arch-priest of imperialism'[1] and India the pivot of her imperial policy. In order to retain her hold on India, Britain had subjugated the other parts of Africa and Asia. Indian soldiers had been used to 'the dirty work of British imperialism'.[2] The independence of India would be a death-blow to British imperialism and the signal for the liberation of other oppressed nationalities.

The idea that the Congress, having declared complete independence as its objective at Madras in 1927, should, as a matter of expediency, accept the ideal of Dominion Status was highly distasteful to Jawaharlal. He told his elders at the Calcutta Congress in December 1928 that if they were 'prepared to pull down the flag of independence' they must

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1. Dwivedi, op.cit. p.146.
2. Ibid. p.101.

give him and men of his thinking 'the liberty to hold on to that flag'. 'This is a vital issue,' he said, 'and we feel with regard to it that there can be no compromise. It is a matter with us of what we think is the honour of the country.' And he warned that the issue might lead to a fratricidal struggle similar to that which tore Ireland after the conclusion of the treaty of 1921.[1]

Jawaharlal, however, always took care to emphasise that their struggle was directed not against England or the English people. 'Our quarrel,' he said, 'is not with the people of England but with the imperialism of England.'[2] 'The day England sheds her imperialism,' he affirmed, 'we shall gladly cooperate with her.'[3] India could have no truck with British imperialism. Nor could she have 'a real measure of freedom within the limits of the British Empire'.[4] 'Before a new bridge is built,' he insisted, 'on the basis of friendship and cooperation, the present chains which tie us to England must be severed. Only then can real cooperation take place.'[5]

The Dominion-Status-*versus*-Independence controversy in 1928-29 was but a symptom of the deeper schism within the Congress. It was a conflict between age and youth within the organisation. A wave of leftist ideas was rolling forward

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1. *The Indian Quarterly Register*, 1928, vol.ii, pp.34-5.
2. *Dwivedi*, *op.cit*, p.137.
3. *Ibid*. p.146.
4. *Ibid*. p.104.
5. *Ibid*. p.95.

in India. Youth Leagues, volunteer corps and Independence Leagues were being organised all over the country. The Soviet Union, China, Turkey and Egypt attracted the younger men. More and more young Congressmen began to drift away from pure Gandhi-ism and call themselves socialists and communists. Even secret revolutionary and terrorist societies grew up. The communists exploited the industrial unrest in the country . The Congress old guard became, more than ever, anxious for a settlement with the Government. The Viceroy, Lord Irwin, had by the force of his character and the sincerity and nobility of his utterances held out hope. It was encouraged by the remark of Ramsay MacDonald at the British Commonwealth Labour Conference on 2 July 1928: 'I hope that within a period of months rather than years there will be a new Dominion of another race, a Dominion which will find self-respect as an equal within the Commonwealth. I refer to India.'[1] Gandhi was not very happy with the young radicals within the Congress. In preference to Jawaharlal and Vallabhbhai he put 'the crown of thorns' - the presidentship of the Congress - on the head of the elder Nehru, considering him to be an influence for conciliation - 'an eminently worthy ambassador of a nation that is in need of and is in the mood to take an honourable compromise'. 'Let the impatient youth of the country wait a while,' he remarked.[2] When 'the impatient youth' threatened to reject the Dominion

1. The Indian Quarterly Register, 1928, vol.ii, p.293.
2. 'Crown of Thorns', Young India, 26 July 1928.

Status ideal of the Nehru Report at the Calcutta Congress towards the end of December 1928, Gandhi used all his personal influence and persuasive skill in favour of that ideal. The radicals demanded that the Congress should start a campaign of civil disobedience at once. Gandhi requested them to wait at least for two years. With great difficulty a compromise was arrived at: If Great Britain did not accept the Nehru Report by the end of 1929 the Congress would organise a campaign of non-cooperation. Gandhi did his best to take the sting out of the ultimatum. He appealed to the authorities not to treat the resolution as a threat, but as an address. 'If there is the slightest trace of a change of heart of the Government they will understand it as the yearning of a nation which is trying to throw off thraldom,' he remarked.[1] 'If the Viceroy,' he added, 'is a worthy representative of his King and his nation, he will take note of this resolution even though it does not contain the clause which I should have liked to be inserted.'[2] Gandhi cancelled his proposed visit to Europe in 1929 and waited in faith and hope.

The Irwin Declaration

The Viceroy did not disappoint Gandhi. As 'a worthy representative of his King and his nation', he rightly understood his 'double duty', to see that the King's Government was carried on and to serve as an intermediary between India

1. The Indian Quarterly Register, 1928, vol.ii, p.42.
2. Ibid. p.43. Gandhi wanted a clause to be introduced into the resolution to the effect that a copy of the resolution along with the Nehru Report should be sent to the Viceroy.

and Great Britain.[1] The story of his visit to England in mid-1929 and the famous announcement which he made on his return on 31 October 1929 has been told by Irwin himself and many others [2] and need not be repeated here. After stating that His Majesty's Government would meet representatives of British India and the Indian States for securing the greatest possible measure of agreement for the final proposals to be submitted to Parliament, Irwin declared that he had been 'authorised on behalf of His Majesty's Government to state clearly that in their judgment it is implicit in the declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress, as there contemplated, is the attainment of Dominion Status'.[3]

Irwin's declaration revived trust and hope. Though the younger Congressmen were suspicious of this 'ingeniously worded announcement, which could mean much or very little',[4] Gandhi and his senior lieutenants welcomed it. To friends in England, who wrote to Gandhi to reciprocate the gesture of the Labour Government, he replied that he was 'dying for co-operation'.'My non-cooperation,' he wrote, 'is a token of my earnest longing for real heart cooperation in place of the cooperation falsely so called.....I can wait for the Dominion Status constitution, if I can get the real Dominion Status in

1. Irwin, Indian Problems, p.66.
2. Halifax, Fulness of Days; A.C.Johnson, Viscount Halifax; S.Gopal, The Viceroyalty of Lord Irwin; Viscount Templewood, Nine Troubled Years; J.Coatman, Years of Destiny.
3. The Times, 1 November 1929.
4. J.Nehru, An Autobiography, p.195.

action, if to-day there is a real change of heart, a real desire on the part of the British people to see India a free and self-respecting nation and on the part of the officials in India a true spirit of service.'[1] The Congress, in association with the Liberals, issued a manifesto offering to co-operate in drafting a Dominion constitution if certain acts were done and certain points clarified. The signatories to the manifesto interpreted Irwin's announcement to convey that the proposed Round Table Conference was 'to meet not to discuss when Dominion Status is to be established, but to frame a scheme of Dominion constitution for India'.[2] Though the president-elect of the forthcoming Congress session, Jawaharlal, allowed himself 'to be talked into signing'[3] the manifesto, a section of the extremists, led by Subhas Bose, S. Kitchlew and Abdul Bari, refused to support it. But still it was a remarkable achievement that the Congress and the Government should have come so near to each other.

Irwin's statement raised a storm of protest in England. The prolonged and severe post-mortem conducted by Parliament brought back the old suspicions in India. Congress leaders sought an assurance from the Viceroy that the sole function of the proposed conference would be to frame a Dominion constitution for India. Irwin, more cautious than ever because of the fierce attacks being made on him in England, could not give any such assurance. Congress leaders,

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1. Tendulkar, Mahatma, vol.ii, p.502.
2. The Times, 4 November 1929.
3. J. Nehru, An Autobiography, p.197.

thereupon, withdrew their support of Irwin's declaration.

'Swaraj.....shall mean Complete Independence'.

The Congress assembled at Lahore towards the end of December 1929 and, according to schedule, declared the Nehru Report to have lapsed and unfurled the flag of independence. At midnight of 31 December it passed a resolution, with barely a score of persons out of many thousands dissenting, which defined the word 'Swaraj' in the Congress constitution to mean 'complete independence'. It considered that nothing was to be gained 'in the existing circumstances' by the Congress being represented at the proposed Round Table Conference, and decided to prepare for launching a civil disobedience campaign.[1]

Did the Congress at Lahore in voting for complete independence also vote for severance of all connection with the British Commonwealth? Professor Coupland thought it did.[2] The facts, however, would not support his conclusion. The resolution passed by the Lahore Congress in 1929 simply declared that 'the word 'Swaraj' in Article I of the Congress constitution shall mean Complete Independence'.[3] It said nothing about the British connection. Nor did it define what complete independence meant. In fact, an attempt made to do so was foiled by Gandhi. Subhas Bose moved an amendment to the resolution proposing, among other things, the addition of a

1. The Indian Quarterly Register, 1929, vol.ii, p.300.
2. 'Thus the Congress had accepted Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's view that India must sever all connection with the British Commonwealth.' R.Coupland, The Indian Problem, p.100.
3. The Indian Quarterly Register, 1929, vol.ii, p.300.

rider to complete independence - 'implying thereby complete severance of the British connection'.[1] Bose's amendment was vigorously opposed by Gandhi, and the Congress - agreeing with Gandhi - rejected it with an overwhelming majority. The clever Mahatma had once again confounded the radicals. The latter were to have nothing but their pound of flesh. Gandhi satisfied their clamour for complete independence but did not allow them to get the Congress committed to secession from the British Commonwealth.

There were three main groups within the Congress at the Lahore session.[2] On the right stood a powerful section of the old guard, led by Malaviya, Sarojini Naidu, N.C.Kelkar and Ansari, which pleaded for caution and delay. It pressed for postponement of decision on change of creed till another All-Parties Conference had considered the matter again. Its position was extremely weak in the open session of the Congress, but it showed surprising strength in the Subjects Committee.[3] On the extreme left stood the radicals, led by Subhas Bose, who wanted a total break under any conditions. They suggested a more radical programme of action, including the establishment of a parallel government in India. In the centre was Gandhi, supported by the elder Nehru and the other faithfuls, determined to fulfil the pledge taken at Calcutta in 1928, but equally determined that the struggle should be

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1. Ibid. p.302.
2. For the proceedings of the Lahore session see The Indian Quarterly Register, 1929, vol.ii, pp.286-311; The Times of India, 27-31 December 1929.
3. Malaviya's amendment secured 77 votes against 114 in the Subjects Committee.

disciplined and peaceful, and that the door of honourable compromise should not be closed. It was Gandhi who secured an overwhelming victory at the Lahore session of the Congress. And in as much as Gandhi triumphed, we are safe to conclude that the Congress only voted for independence and not for secession at Lahore in 1929.

This conclusion is further confirmed by the future behaviour of Gandhi and the Congress. Soon after the Lahore Congress Gandhi wrote: 'The independence resolution need frighten nobody. I had repeatedly declared that for me, as for all other Congressmen, Dominion Status could mean only virtual independence; that is partnership at will for mutual benefit and to be dissolved at the instance of either partner.'[1] In a letter to Irwin on 4 March 1930 Gandhi assured him to the same effect.[2] The Viceroy wrote to the King on 13 March 1931 that he was sure that Gandhi wanted to find the way to peace and that it was 'definitely untrue to suggest, as I see it suggested from time to time, that he (Gandhi) is out to break the unity of Your Majesty's Empire'.[3] Irwin communicated to the King what Gandhi had told him that in his view 'the highest form' of complete independence for India was the one that could be attained 'in association with

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1. Gandhi, Speeches and Writings, p.734. A communication to the New York World, 9 January 1930.
2. 'But the resolution of independence should cause no alarm if the word 'Dominion Status', mentioned in your announcement, has been used in its accepted sense. For has it not been admitted by responsible British statesmen that Dominion Status is virtual independence.' Gandhi, Speeches and Writings, p.739.
3. H.Nicolson, King George the Fifth, p.508.

Great Britain'.[1]

A resolution passed by the next session of the Congress held at Karachi in March 1931 contemplated the maintenance of the British connection, with 'the right to either party to end the partnership at will'.[2] It was this resolution which Gandhi carried with him as the 'mandate' of the Congress when he went to attend the second session of the Round Table Conference later in 1931. At the Conference he clearly stated that what the Congress desired was not secession from the British Commonwealth, but only freedom to secede. 'If we are intent upon complete independence,' Gandhi remarked, 'it is not from any sense of arrogance; it is not because we want to parade before the universe that we have now severed all connection with the British people. Nothing of the kind. On the contrary, you will find in this mandate itself that the

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1. Gandhi told Irwin: 'I want to see India established in her own self-respect and in the respect of the world. I therefore want to see India able to discuss with Great Britain on terms of equality, and Great Britain willing to discuss with India on such terms. I know perfectly well that we want British help in many things for a long time yet - defence, administration and so on - and I am prepared to have safeguards, or as I prefer to call them, adjustments, provided these are really in the interest of India..... If we can reach agreement on those lines, I shall be satisfied that I have got Purna Swaraj or complete independence, and India will have got it in what to me is the highest form in which it can be attained, namely, in association with Great Britain. But if Great Britain will not help me in this way, and if this achievement in partnership cannot be brought about, then I must pursue my end of Purna Swaraj or complete independence in isolation from Great Britain, and this I definitely regard as the second best.' Ibid. p.508.
2. The Times of India, 30 March 1931.

Congress contemplates a partnership - the Congress contemplates a connection with the British people - but that connection to be such as can exist between two absolute equals.'[1] 'Time was,' he added, when I prided myself on being, and being called, a British subject. I have ceased for many years to call myself a British subject; I would far rather be called a rebel than a subject. But I have aspired - I still aspire - to be a citizen, not in the Empire, but in a Commonwealth; in a partnership if possible - if God wills it an indissoluble partnership - but not a partnership superimposed upon one nation by another. Hence you find here that the Congress claims that either party should have the right to sever the connection, to dissolve the partnership.'[2] As for the words 'Dominion Status' or 'complete independence', he did not care. 'Call it by any name you like,' he remarked, 'a rose will smell as sweet by another name, but it must be the rose of liberty that I want and not the artificial product.'[3]

The Future

By 1928-29 Motilal Nehru and Gandhi had realised that they had had their innings. Conscious of the hiatus between themselves and the younger generation and convinced that the battle of the future would have to be fought by younger men, they decided that it would be better if the latter began to

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1. Indian Round Table Conference, Second Session, Proceedings of the Federal Structure Committee and Minorities Committee, p. 17.
2. Ibid.
3. Cmd. 3997, p.393.

take responsibilities in the presence of their elders.[1] It was an extremely wise decision. The transference of power to new hands was made in 1929 and the recipient was carefully chosen. The crown of the Congress was placed on the head of Jawaharlal. He was rash, impetuous and extremist, but Gandhi judged correctly that responsibility would mellow and sober him, and take the edge off his extreme leftism. At the Lahore session in 1929 Jawaharlal occupied a position somewhere between the majority group led by Gandhi and Motilal and the more irrepressible and irresponsible radicals led by Subhas Bose who were anxious for a complete break with Britain. He declared himself 'a socialist and a republican'[2] and remarked: 'Independence for us means complete freedom from British domination and British imperialism. Having attained our freedom; I have no doubt that India will welcome all attempts at world cooperation and federation, and will even agree to give up part of her own independence to a larger group of which she is an equal member.'[3] He reiterated his opposition to Dominion Status, but left the door open to friendship with Britain: 'India could never be an equal member of the Commonwealth unless imperialism and all it implies is discarded.'[4] Nehru was the most internationally-minded of Congressmen. Not only was he free from narrow nationalism, he had no bitterness against the British people

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1. J. Nehru, A Bunch of Old Letters, pp.58, 61-2; Tendulkar, Mahatma, vol.ii, pp.488-90.
2. J.Nehru, India and the World, p.27.
3. Ibid. p.23.
4. Ibid. p.24.

as such.[1] As he wrote a little later: 'All my predilections (apart from the political plane) are in favour of England and the English people, and if I have become what is called an uncompromising opponent of British rule in India, it is almost in spite of myself.'[2]

The second leader whom Gandhi chose to preside over the Congress session at Karachi in 1931 was Vallabhbhai Patel, who made it clear that complete independence did not mean, 'was not intended to mean a churlish refusal to associate with Great Britain,' that it did 'not exclude the possibility of equal partnership for mutual benefit and dissolvable at the will of either party'.[3]

This choice of good leaders was yet another service that Gandhi rendered to India and the Commonwealth. Lt. Comm. Kenworthy had remarked in Parliament on 14 February 1922: 'Gandhi has been abused by everyone, including the Secretary of State for India.....I think the time may come when we shall rather congratulate ourselves on having a man of Gandhi's eminence with the ideas which he apparently possesses. It may be fortunate that the agitation in India is led by a Gandhi and not by a De Valera.'[4] History has borne out the truth of Kenworthy's remark.

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1. 'Anger and resentment have often filled my mind at various happen ings, and yet as I sit here (in prison), and look deep into my mind and heart, I do not find any anger against England or the English people.' J.Nehru, An Autobiography, p.418.
2. Ibid. p.419.
3. Congress Presidential Addresses, second series, p.907.
4. 150 H.C. Deb. 5s.,coll. 936-7.

CHAPTER IV

THE NATIONAL LIBERAL FEDERATION OF INDIA

The Moderates and the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms

'Rally the Moderates' had been the watchword of Minto and Morley. So was it of Chelmsford and Montagu. It was not so much the clamour of the radicals as the friendly pressure of the moderate and sober elements in India which had persuaded the authorities to make the declaration of 20 August 1917. The Montagu-Chelmsford reform proposals were also framed in close consultation with the leading Moderates within the Congress. Some of the latter, such as S.P.Sinha,[1] B.N.Basu[2] and S.Nair,[3] were already in the inner councils of the Government. Others, like Srinivasa Sastri, T.B.Sapru, C.Y.Chintamani and C.H.Setalvad, were taken by Montagu into his confidence and told of the proposed scheme of reforms.[4] They were evidently not pleased with the scheme, for they felt that it did not go far enough and would not satisfy the country. But they were all profoundly impressed with Montagu's personality, his honesty, earnestness and sincerity of purpose. They found him extremely sympathetic and determined to do his very best for India. And, above all, they were made to recognise the immense difficulties under which

1. Member of the executive council of the Governor of Bengal; formerly member of the executive council of the Governor-General of India.
2. Member of the council of the Secretary of State for India.
3. Member of the executive council of the Governor-General of India.
4. Montagu, An Indian Diary, pp. 163, 236, 274.

the Secretary of State was labouring - a coalition government in England, the danger of encountering opposition from Curzon and Milner in the Cabinet, the known antipathy of the Government of India to any weakening of central authority, and the already pronounced hostility of the civil services and Anglo-Indian circles, both in England and India, to any sweeping reforms. The Moderates were, in effect, told to be realistic and not to look at the shortcomings of the first instalment, but to ask 'whether it led assuredly to self-government'.[1] Reasonable and loyal as the Moderates were, they decided to make the most of whatever was attainable under the circumstances and, in any case, not to let the Secretary of State down, for, if they were only half-converted to his scheme, they had become full converts to Montagu himself.[2]

Montagu was conscious of the fact that his scheme fell 'far short of the circumstances of the country', that it stood 'no chance of public acceptance' and would be 'none too popular with the Extremists'.[3] He was, therefore, anxious to secure in advance the support of the Moderates, the more so in order to convince the Cabinet and Parliament that the scheme would be worked by at least some party in India. This did not prove to be very difficult, for the Moderates were themselves willing to be wooed. They were

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1. Ibid. p.118.
2. C.P.Ramaswami Aiyer, 'Montagu: A Personal Tribute', The Indian Review, January 1925, pp.73-6.
3. Montagu, op.cit. pp.55,65, 151, 236, 248.

already feeling uneasy within the Congress, where the Extremists were busy displacing 'these old-stagers',[1] as they called them, from their positions of influence within the organisation, or making the pace too hot for those who had managed to survive their iconoclastic fervour. The Moderates realised that in order to save themselves and the reforms - for the Extremists were a threat to both- it was necessary to break away from the Extremists and accept the reforms gracefully. While Montagu was still in India, he had assured himself that the Moderates would support the reforms, secede from the Congress, - were, in fact, already doing so - form a party of their own, run their own newspapers, send a deputation to England to support him and would be, in their turn, supported by the Government of India.[2]

On 19 February 1918 Srinivasa Sastri's weekly paper, the Servant of India, made its first appearance. It enunciated its policy in the words borrowed from the late M.G.Ranade: 'Liberalism and moderation will be our watchwords. The spirit of liberalism implies.....giving to the rulers the loyalty that is due to the law they are bound to administer, but securing at the same time to the people the equality which is their right under the law. Moderation implies the conditions of never vainly aspiring after the impossible or after too remote ideals, but striving each day to take the next step in the order of natural growth by doing

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1. J.Nehru, A Bunch of Old Letters, p.2.
2. Montagu, op.cit. pp.71, 104, 133-4, 217, 236, 363.

the work that lies nearest to our hands in a spirit of compromise and fairness.'[1] Here was the creed of the Indian Moderates put in a nutshell. Even before the Montagu-Chelmsford Report was published, the Moderates had begun canvassing support for it.[2] In June 1918 a National Liberal League was actually organised in Bengal, with S.N.Banerjea as its president. Its declared objective was 'the attainment of responsible government (for India) as an integral part of the British Empire by methodical and ordered progress'.[3] The contention of the Moderates later, that they were scared by the manner in which the Extremists reacted to the Montagu-Chelmsford Report into abstaining from the Congress and into forming an organisation of their own, is hardly borne out by the facts. Their minds were, in truth, already made up.

When the Report was published on 8 July 1918 the Moderates, though they urged improvements, welcomed the reform proposals contained therein as a real and substantial step and a sympathetic and honest attempt to give effect to the declaration of August 1917.[4] They boycotted the special session of the Congress called to consider the Report and decided to summon a conference of their own. While the Congress subjected the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme of reforms to severe criticism and pronounced it 'disappointing and unsatisfactory', a resolution moved by S.N.Banerjea,

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1. The Servant of India, 19 February 1918.
2. C.R.Das, India for Indians, pp.125-6.
3. The Englishman, 13 June 1918; The Indian Review, July 1918, p.544.
4. For Indian opinions on the Montagu-Chelmsford Report see S.Satyamurti, The Montagu-Chelmsford Reform Proposals; and Natesan (ed.), India's Goal.

welcoming it as 'a genuine effort and a definite advance', was passed in the Imperial Legislative Council on 7 September 1918 by an overwhelming majority of 46 to 2.[1] The first All-India Moderates' Conference, which met at Bombay on 1 and 3 November 1918, expressed its 'cordial welcome', 'hearty support' and 'grateful appreciation' of the reform proposals 'as constituting a distinct advance on the present conditions' and 'a real and substantial step towards the progressive realisation of responsible government'. It, however, suggested certain 'necessary modifications and improvements therein'. They were: the introduction of the principle of responsibility in the Government of India; half the members of the proposed Council of State to be elective; the power of certification by the Governor-General to be limited to matters concerning defence, foreign affairs, relations with the Indian States, peace and order; half the members of the Viceroy's Executive Council to be Indians; and the grant of fiscal autonomy to India like the Dominions.[2]

S.N.Banerjea, as president of the Conference, defined the Moderate creed as 'cooperate when we can; criticise when we must'. He spoke of 'the change, the profound change in the spirit and policy of the Government' and remarked that the period of propagandism was over and that of reconstruction had begun. While he pleaded for a rally to the support of the scheme, he warned the authorities of the grave consequences

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1. Proceedings of the Imperial Legislative Council, 1918-19, vol.lvii, p.93.
2. The Times of India, 2, 4 November 1918.

of any undue delay in the enactment of the reforms or any attempt to whittle them down. 'We have endeavoured,' he said, 'to do our duty. The Government must fulfil its part.'[1]

The Moderates rescued India from being stampeded into a rejection of the reform scheme and their attitude exercised, for some time, a sobering influence over the Congress. While urging modifications, they vigorously supported the scheme before the Joint Select Committee in 1919 and had the satisfaction of getting it improved in many respects.

The Government of India had written to the Secretary of State on 5 March 1919 that the Moderates represented 'the ablest and most respected Indian opinion'.[2] 'Ablest' it certainly was, but it is doubtful if it was the 'most respected'. The Moderates were men of political wisdom and experience. They stood for circumspection, balance, sense and ordered progress. But they were no longer the type from which Indian public opinion was busy choosing its popular idols. The Times had suggested that meeting in a conference was not enough, the Moderates must 'bestir themselves' and if they wished for political power 'they must struggle against their opponents'.[3] Energy, activity and fighting quality were not, however, the strong points of the Moderates. At best they could sail in fair weather with the wind provided by a generous and liberal government. But the post-war weather in India was by no means fair and the Government

1. The Times of India, 2 November 1918.
2. Cmd. 123, p.1.
3. The Times, 19 August 1918.

of India's primary task of governing had not been in any way lightened by doing, what they considered, 'the maximum possible' in the direction of reforms. Scarcity, high prices, a devastating influenza epidemic, Muslim uneasiness about Turkey and the Khilafat, and the slow process of law-making at Westminster were hardly conducive to the growth of moderation in India. The passage of the ill-timed Rowlatt Act, despite appeals and protests by the Moderates to the contrary, exposed their position and shook their prestige. While official opinion lamented that the Moderates lacked backbone and had failed the very first 'test', the Moderates felt that the ground underneath their feet was being cut by the unwisdom of the Government. And then, in April 1919 came the Jallianwalla Bagh incident which put the reforms and the Moderates into the dark shade from which they never emerged.

When the second Moderates' Conference met at Calcutta on 30 December 1919, the Reform Act had been passed and the King-Emperor's proclamation had created a very favourable impression. S.N.Banerjea and Mrs. Besant, who had now become a supporter of the reform scheme, enthusiastically declared that 'India was at last free'.[1] The Conference showed a genuine appreciation of the new spirit and an earnest desire to cooperate with the Government. Sir B.C.Mitter condemned the extravagant demands of the Extremists and their attitude of 'distrust of the great British people', who had throughout their long history been the champions of freedom. 'To be a

1. The Round Table, March 1920, p.397.

component part,' he added,' of the Empire of which England is the centre seems to me to be the guarantee of our progressive advance to the full measure of that imperial citizenship of which civil freedom is the watchword. If we secure such freedom in association with the British Empire it will rest on a rock of adamant.....'[1] Sir Sivaswamy Aiyer, the president of the Conference, remarked that they had met 'to celebrate with heart-felt rejoicing the auspicious event' which had 'started India on the path of self-government' and was 'destined within a measurable period of time to lead her to the goal of full responsible government'. He referred to the 'short course of apprenticeship of a decade or two' as 'not unnecessary' in the art of responsible government. Though he regretted that their suggestion for the introduction of dyarchy in the Government of India had not been accepted, he hailed the Act as 'a generous measure' and expressed the hope that full provincial autonomy would be achieved 'at the end of the first decade' and the goal of full responsible government in the country 'within twenty years'. He concluded by saying: 'I trust that from this day India will be described as a 'Dominion' and not a Dependency of the Empire and I look forward to the day when India will walk proud and erect among the nations of the earth conscious of a partnership on equal terms in the greatest Empire which the world has seen and of a right of British citizenship which will connote

1. Report of the Proceedings of the Second Session of the All-India Conference of the Moderate Party,1919, p.10.

equal privileges for all members in all lands over which the British flag waves, proud of the glorious contribution she can make to the strength of the Empire, to the thought and culture of the world and to the moral forces that will tend to make this world a better and happier one for all.'[1]

The Character of the Liberal Party

The Liberals, as the Moderates officially styled themselves in 1920, claimed - and rightly so - that they stood for the policy of the wise founders of the Congress, whose watchword was constitutional progress in close cooperation with the British Government. They asserted that they represented the spirit of the old Congress whose name had been usurped by others. The Liberals belonged to the prosperous and the well-to-do classes and were opposed to radical social and political changes. They were busy and elderly men - mostly eminent lawyers, businessmen and landlords - whose politics was of the drawing-room or council-chamber variety - respectable, quiet, compromising and moderate. They were out of touch with the thoughts and emotions of youth. The Liberal Party contained in its ranks many active politicians who were able men with long records of public service. Its influence in the country was, however, small and its following insubstantial. It represented, as Jawaharlal Nehru put it, 'bourgeoisdom in excelsis with all its pedestrian solidity'.[2] The Liberals were not, in fact, made for the rough and tumble of a nationalist struggle. Their politics was more like

1. Ibid. pp.14-35.
2. J. Nehru, An Autobiography, p.411.

arguing a case or participating in a grand debate. They never had a satisfactory party organisation and though small in number had their own caves and groups.

They earned no little odium for holding offices and cooperating with the Government at a time when self-sacrifice and non-cooperation were the favourite slogans. They were accused of having merged themselves with the bureaucracy. The authorities also in their wisdom spared no Liberal of any consequence of some title or honour. This proved to be disastrous for them.. They came to be called 'Liberal Knights' contemptuously and condemned for having sold themselves 'just for a riband' and 'a handful of silver'.

The Liberals always remained convinced adherents to constitutional means. Mass agitation, non-cooperation, civil disobedience and aggressive policies were hateful to them. They condemned them as not only undesirable in themselves, but as tending to alienate the British people. They hoped to achieve their objectives by a display of 'wisdom, experience, moderation, power of persuasion, quiet influence and real efficiency'.[1] They attempted to steer their course between the two extremes of the Government and the Congress. They blamed the Government for their unwise policies of repression and of slow and suspicious reform which gave birth to extremism in India and kept it alive. On the other hand, they denounced the Congress for its disloyal and semi-revolutionary policies which ruined the chances of success of the Montagu

1. Srinivasa Sastri, cited in J. Nehru, An Autobiography, p. 421.

experiment. Doling out their superior wisdom, the Liberals made themselves distasteful to both the nationalists in the Congress and the authorities. Their 'practical idealism', on which they prided themselves, was not practical enough to the Government, nor any idealism to the nationalists. The authorities accused them of flirting with the agitators and of not being courageous enough to court unpopularity by sincerely supporting the Government. To ardent nationalist imagination they appeared to be timid, reactionary men, who neither dreamt nor acted, who talked the strange, discredited language of yesterday and behaved like courtiers. The Liberals, Chintamani wrote, 'found themselves in the unenviable position of the proverbial earthen pot between two brass vessels'.[1]

The Liberals and British Rule:

The attitude of the Liberals towards British rule was discerning and discriminating. They did not underrate the manifold advantages which India had derived, and continued to derive, from British rule - the inestimable benefits of peace and security; law and order; English education and works of public utility; the political unification of the sub-continent and the growth of the spirit of nationality. 'Would there have been an India but for the almost providential intervention of the British?' 'And, what held India together to-day and saved her from disintegrating and relapsing into Chinese chaos but the 'steel frame' of the British Raj?' 'Who guarded India's

1. Chintamani, India's Constitution at Work, p.7.

long sea coast and her, historically the most vulnerable, north-western frontier securely but the strong arm of the British Empire?', the Liberals enquired of the impatient idealists who talked of destroying the Raj and driving out the British. As anxious as any other nationalist to see their country attain self-government at the earliest date, the Liberals recognised that, considering as a whole, British rule was a favourable circumstance in the present evolution of India and any precipitate withdrawal of it would be disastrous. They did not talk of destruction before reconstruction could begin. They believed in building upon the existing foundations gradually. The nationalist accused them of admiring the architecture and the edifice of the British Raj and thinking solely in terms of replacing its owners. Nor did the Liberals think, as so many Indian nationalists were inclined to do, that British rule was the cause of all the ills of which their country was suffering and that all would be well once the 'satanic' Raj was gone. Their pursuit of ideals was tempered by a perception of practical limitations. Their nationalist ardour did not blind them to the fact that their nation was still in the making and that the British connection, far from being the dead hand, was a guarantee of its peaceful and orderly evolution.

The Liberals and English Culture

The Liberals were steeped in English liberal tradition and were great admirers of English institutions and the English way of life. They were men who had drunk deep of

English history, literature, law and politics. Most of the Liberal leaders were highly anglicised. They paid frequent visits to England and had close personal contacts with British officials in India and public men in England. They did not share in the general reaction against Western ideals and institutions to which Gandhi gave a vigorous encouragement in India. 'If there is one thing,' said Sivaswamy Aiyer in 1924, 'which I value more than anything else as an important factor for the regeneration of this country, it is the British connection. I value the cooperation of the English people. I value their collaboration with us in the political, in the economic sphere.....I value not merely these things, but I value also English institutions, political, judicial and administrative. I value English culture.'[1]

The Liberals and the Crown

The Liberals took pride in calling themselves British citizens and fellow-subjects of the Empire. They claimed self-government in their own country and equality of treatment for Indians throughout the Empire on the basis of their common allegiance to the same Crown. The idea of belonging to the biggest, the mightiest and the freest Empire that the world had ever seen appealed to their imagination, and they demanded an equal share in its glories, privileges and obligations. Nor were they unconscious of the unique position that India occupied within the Empire and the special relation in which their country stood with regard to the Crown. 'Do not

1. Legislative Assembly Debates, 1924, vol.iv, pt.1, p.726.

forget,' Sapru told the Imperial Conference in 1923 feelingly, 'that my country, India, is the one country which makes the British Empire truly Imperial. I take pride in that.'[1] Loyalty to the person and the throne of the sovereign was a real and living sentiment with them. There was something of Oriental deference and attachment in this feeling. It was also inspired by a great admiration for constitutional monarchy in England and a vivid perception of the part played by the Crown as a bond of the Empire, to the equal membership of which they aspired. And, above all, the Crown was associated in their imagination - as in that of so many Indians of the older generation - with the historic proclamations of 1858, 1908, 1911 and 1919.

The Liberals and the British Commonwealth

The Liberals had a faith and an enthusiasm for the British Commonwealth almost akin to those of liberal and enlightened imperialists. They had no sympathy with the imperial idea as a symbol of power and domination. They disliked imperialists like Rhodes and Kipling who gloried in 'painting the map red', though they often themselves talked with pride of India's membership of the vastest and the mightiest Empire in history. They were frankly critical of imperialists whose credo was the race and who considered the racial bond as fundamental to the unity of the Empire. 'I am one of those men,' said Sapru, 'who say that the British Empire can never be described as an exclusively white Empire.'[2] The talk of

1. Cmd. 1988. p.73.
2. Cmd. 1988. p.86.

the civilising mission of the Empire and of 'the White Man's burden' left them cold. The theory of trusteeship smacked to them of cant and often evoked caustic comments. With all their admiration for the British people and their ideals and achievements, the Liberals could not persuade themselves to believe that the British were the disinterested guardians of subject peoples. Though they readily acknowledged the many advantages derived by Indians from British rule, they did not fail to enumerate the equally enormous advantages - material, military, moral and political - which Great Britain herself derived from her control of India. These latter, they felt, vitiated the outlook of Englishmen towards the problem of Indian self-government and made them hesitate in applying fully to India the principles and ideals which they professed. Englishmen, they believed, were deeply interested in maintaining the status quo and retaining their hold on India, for they feared the consequences of the political emancipation of India as regards their vested interests. And they quoted the statements of English statesmen themselves to prove that their fears were not imaginary. They ridiculed, therefore, the attitude of paternal benevolence exhibited by a certain type of British imperialist and likened his mentality to that of Sir Joseph Bowley - a character in Dickens - the self-styled friend and father of the poor.[1]

What appealed to the Liberals most in the imperial idea was its emphasis on the ideals of justice, equality, freedom

1. Sivaswamy Aiyer, Indian Constitutional Problems, pp.354-5.

and brotherhood - almost the very ideals which they attributed to the genius and traditions of the British people. Sir Stanley Reed recalls how in 1922 Srinivasa Sastri 'electrified a sun-dried audience at Simla with his confession of faith - the British Commonwealth is the greatest instrument for human freedom the world has ever seen'.[1] Sastri remarked on the occasion[2] that the true nature and the great benevolent influence of the British Commonwealth were not always best understood by Englishmen themselves and, perhaps, it was necessary not to be an Englishman to do so. As a member of the Servants of India Society, he said, he had never wavered in the faith which the basic article of that organisation enunciated that 'the connection of India with England was intended on high to fulfil some high purpose for the benefit of mankind'. Sastri observed that 'this great political organisation' - the British Commonwealth - stood 'unique amongst the political institutions of the world, for something above all others' and that was 'the reconciliation of the East and the West'. To him the most outstanding feature of the British Commonwealth was 'the bringing together in happy harmony the people of varied races and varied complexions; the blending together under one law, under one sovereign, under one Imperial Parliament, people of adverse nationalities, various cultures, hitherto felt in many other political organisations to be incompatible and never under one flag'. He

1. Reed, The India I Knew, p.164.
2. Banquet at the Viceregal Lodge, Simla, 12 May 1922, on the eve of his departure to the Dominions.

believed that wisely guided the British Commonwealth could provide a happy solution of all those conflicts of races, religions and cultures which menaced the peace of the world.[1]

It was this ideal of a multi-racial Commonwealth, a lesser League of Nations, which appealed to the Indian Liberals. 'Think for a moment,' Sapru asked the Commonwealth statesmen in 1923, 'what India means to you?.....If we are incorporated within the Commonwealth, think what we shall mean to the peace of the world, with our ideals of self-government, bridging as we do the East and the West, shouldering burdens which are yours as well as ours for the service of humanity.'[2]

The Liberals were ardent admirers of British culture and institutions, especially of British parliamentary democracy, and the British Commonwealth was to them a community of the freest, the most civilised and the most successfully evolved nations in the world. It is true that when they talked of their association with the British Commonwealth, what they had in mind was primarily India's relations with Britain, for their contacts with the Dominions were few and far from being pleasant. But they were conscious of the fact that the British Commonwealth was a microcosm of the world and its survival and development might well prove to be the precursor of 'the Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World'.

The Liberals and the Position of Indians in the Empire

The disabilities imposed on Indian nationals domiciled

1. Srinivasa Sastri, Speeches and Writings, pp. 240-55.
2. Cmd. 1988, p.87.

in other parts of the Empire, however, sorely tried the faith of the Indian Liberals in the Commonwealth ideals of equality and liberty. 'If ever India become lost to Britain and the British Empire,' warned a Liberal speaker at the annual session of the Federation in December 1920, 'it will not be so much on account of questions of internal administration, important and intricate as they are and may become, but on this question of the treatment of Indians in the Colonies.'[1] While they accepted the first part of the resolution of the Imperial Conference of 1921,[2] 'that each community of the British Commonwealth should enjoy complete control of the composition of its own population by means of restriction from any of the other communities', they drew attention to the second part of the same resolution which said that there was 'an incongruity between the position of India as an equal member of the British Empire and the existence of disabilities upon British Indians lawfully domiciled in some other parts of the Empire' and demanded their removal. During his tour of the Dominions in 1922, Sastri repeatedly emphasised that there was 'a necessary condition to India loyally remaining within the Empire' and it was that her nationals who happened to be domiciled in the Dominions before the advent of the fact of exclusion should be fairly and justly treated. A narration of the indignities, privations and hardships to which Indians were subjected in many parts of the Empire, he told his audiences,

1. G. Aiyer, Report of the Proceedings of the Third Session of the National Liberal Federation of India, 1920, p.9.
2. Cmd. 1474, p.8.

would suggest that they were living in a barbarous empire and not the British Empire. Indians wanted to stay within the Empire, but if they could not be proud of their position in it, they might reluctantly be compelled to seek their destiny elsewhere, rather than continue in an Empire where as a matter of deliberate policy disabilities of a humiliating character were imposed upon them.[1] 'Any inequality of Indian nationals,' Sapru told the Imperial Conference in 1923, 'enters like iron into our souls .....it cuts to the quick our national pride and our new consciousness. It permeates and sours our whole outlook in regard to Imperial relationship.'[2] It was a question of 'Izzat' with Indians, he said, and 'When 'Izzat' (which means honour) is at stake, we prefer death to anything else'.[3] He claimed that he was fighting for a great principle whose denial was a threat to the unity of the Empire. 'As a subject of King George,....I fight,' he asserted, 'for a place in his household and I will not be content with a place in his stables.'[4] He reminded General Smuts of the assurances he had given when the principle of reciprocity was accepted in 1917, that once rid of the fear of being swamped by unlimited Indian immigration, the Indians who were domiciled in South Africa would be 'treated as human beings with feelings like our own and in a proper manner'.[5] He also took him to task for arguing that equal political rights did not follow

1. Srinivasa Sastri, Speeches and Writings, pp.256-304.
2. Cmd. 1988, p.74.
3. Ibid. p.73.
4. Ibid. p.72.
5. Cd. 8566, p.119; Cmd. 1988, p.78.

from Imperial citizenship and common allegiance to the same Crown. While prepared to debate the constitutional and legal position before any competent authority, Sapru contented himself by pointing out: 'That allegiance with us is a real living thing. Shake that allegiance, and you shake the foundations of the entire fabric, with consequences which it is difficult to over-estimate.'[1]

Despite their soreness on the question of the treatment of Indians in the Dominions, especially in South Africa, the Liberals were prepared to make allowance for the inability of the British Government to interfere in the internal affairs of the self-governing Dominions in order to secure redress for Indian settlers. They, however, treated British policy in Kenya as a test of the sincerity of British professions. This policy which culminated in the famous Kenya White Paper of July 1923 came as a rude shock to them, for it retained, under threat of rebellion from white settlers, the racial bar in Kenya highlands and imposed franchise discrimination and immigration restrictions on Indians. Kenya was a Crown Colony and if the resolution of the Imperial Conference of 1921 did not bind South Africa it certainly bound the British Government. The restrictions were, therefore, galling not only in themselves, but because of the source from which they came and

1. Cmd. 1988, p.73. Again, 'Allegiance to the sovereign is a very living thing. It is not a mere figure of speech, and, whenever you pass any law which affects the allegiance of the subject to the sovereign and the corresponding duty of protection of the sovereign to the subject, you tread on very dangerous ground.' Ibid. p.86.

their general moral effect. To the Indian Liberals it was 'the great betrayal,' the admission of 'moral bankruptcy' by British statesmen.[1] Indians, said the enraged Liberals, were not equal members of the British Commonwealth, but 'helots in a Boer Empire'.[2] 'Kenya lost, everything is lost,' exclaimed Sastri.[3] How could Indians plead for equal treatment in the Dominions when the British Government itself had condemned them to injustice and inequality in a Crown Colony? Speaking in the Council of State in March 1923, Sastri had warned: 'There will be very few friends left in India to plead for the cause of the British Empire. You will wipe out the friends of Britain by any such settlement.'[4] After the publication of the White Paper he remarked, more in grief than in anger, that he was 'a changed man' and that his faith in the British Empire and its mission had received a severe setback.[5]

Liberal Demand for Revision of the Constitution

In spite of all the make-believe in which the Liberals had indulged in regard to the Act of 1919, the fact remained that they were themselves dissatisfied with it and knew that it fell far short of the expectations of the country in general. One of them had even blurted out before the Joint Select Committee that if no simultaneous advance was made at the centre there would be an agitation in India which might

1. Srinivasa Sastri, Speeches and Writings, p.467.
2. Ibid. p.507; Hancock, Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs, vol.1, p.226.
3. Srinivasa Sastri, Speeches and Writings, p.517.
4. Ibid. p.467.
5. Ibid. pp.509, 526.

'stagger imagination'.[1] The Liberals had agreed to work the reforms more in a mood of wise resignation because of their faith in Montagu and the belief that the Act offered opportunities for further advance which it would be unwise to throw away in a fit of sulkiness. While the Congress looked the gift-horse of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms rather closely in the mouth, the Liberals looked forward to riding the horse itself.

Left to themselves, there is little doubt, the Liberals would have sincerely and whole-heartedly worked the reforms for some time and demanded the grant of the next instalment only as a reward for proved merit. But, with the country in the full swing of the non-cooperation movement, the Liberals could hardly afford to concentrate on their lessons with an easy conscience. The result was that hardly had the Act been put into operation than the Liberals themselves began pressing for its revision. In September 1921 a Liberal member moved a resolution in the Legislative Assembly suggesting that steps should be taken to ensure the grant of full responsible government in the provinces and the transfer of all subjects, except defence, foreign and political relations, to responsible ministers at the centre in 1924, and the attainment of 'full Dominion self-government' in 1930.[2] The resolution was more in the nature of a feeler. It was inspired not only by the anxiety about the worsening political situation in the country and the need to placate public feelings, but

1. H. Samarth, H.C.203, vol.ii, p.159.
2. Legislative Assembly Debates, 1921, vol.ii, p.1128.

also by the knowledge that responsible official circles realised that the transitional stage would have to be shortened.[1] The Home Member, Sir William Vincent, confirmed this impression further when he observed during the debate on the resolution:'.....nor do I personally believe that the present transitional scheme of this Government can last as long as is expected. I think we in the Government of India appreciate that as much as any one.....'[2]

The Government spokesmen, Sir William Vincent and Sir Malcolm Hailey, while sympathising with the natural desire of the members for further advance, pointed out that insufficient time had elapsed to justify a change, the experience of the Assembly had not been tested, the electorates were not yet trained and the possibilities of expansion within the Act were not yet exhausted. As regards the demand for ensuring full responsible government in India by 1930, they observed that it was difficult to foresee that India would develop a spirit of citizenship and nationality and the power to defend herself in the near future, and unless these two fundamental conditions were fulfilled the country could not attain Dominion self-government. They added that the present moment was hardly opportune to approach Parliament for a further political advance and warned the Assembly not to encourage elements opposed to Indian aspirations in England by any hasty and ill-considered demand.[3] At their suggestion, it was decided that

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1. See p. 286 below.
2. Legislative Assembly Debates, 1921, vol.ii, p.1248.
3. Ibid. pp. 1247-54, 1274-9.

the Assembly should pass a resolution recommending to the Governor-General in Council that he should convey to the Secretary of State the view of the Assembly that the progress made by India on the path of responsible government warranted a re-examination and revision of the constitution at an earlier date than 1929. A resolution to this effect was passed unanimously by the Assembly on 29 September 1921 and was accepted by the Government.[1]

If the debate on the resolution did nothing else, it at least confirmed and encouraged the belief that the revision of the constitution would take place before 1929. The Liberal Federation at its annual session in December 1921 urged that 'in view of the experience obtained by the working of the Reforms Act, rapid growth of national consciousness and the strong and growing demand among all sections of people for a fuller control over their destinies', full autonomy should be introduced in the provincial governments and all subjects, except defence, foreign and political relations and ecclesiastical affairs, should be transferred to popular control in the central government at the beginning of 1924.[2] The mover of the resolution, Sir Sivaswamy Aiyer, dwelt at length upon the defects of the existing constitution and the gravity of the political situation in the country. He pointed out that the reforms had fallen far short of their expectations and that the mistake of the authorities in not accepting the modifications and improvements suggested by them was the main cause of

1. Ibid. pp. 1282-6.
2. The Indian Annual Register, 1922, vol.i, pp.429-30.

the present agitation. The Liberals were demanding nothing new, he said, but 'simply reiterating the demand that was originally made'.[1]

The Liberals and Montagu's Resignation

Montagu's resignation in March 1922 struck the Indian Liberals like a thunderbolt, for they had placed almost all their hopes on him. With him as the Secretary of State, they were confident that the reforms would be worked in a liberal spirit, the period of transition would be shortened and India would attain Dominion Status at the earliest date.[2] His departure made them feel like waifs and they feared that the forces which had contrived to bring about his downfall would attempt a policy of reaction or at least of stagnation in Indian affairs. Subsequent events served only to confirm their worst fears. The new Secretary of State, Lord Peel, in his reply to the resolution of the Assembly of September 1921 revealed a non possumus attitude. The British Government turned down a scheme prepared by the Government of India for the complete Indianisation of the army within 35 years. The War Office opposed a slight reduction in the British army in India which the Government of India had recommended as a matter of urgent economy and which even the Commander-in-Chief in India had considered absolutely safe. The Government of India, faced with an acute financial stringency, attempted to balance the budget by increasing the salt tax. The Assembly, annoyed at

1. Ibid. p.430.
2. Srinivasa Sastri, 'Edwin Samuel Montagu', The Indian Review, May 1925, pp.372-5.

the behaviour of the War Office, refused to pass the grant and the Governor-General, Lord Reading, had to resort to certification. The Times had reminded the Assembly of the possibility of 'reverse steps' contemplated in the Act of 1919 and threatened it with serious consequences - 'an examination of the whole problem from a new angle' - if it attempted to interfere with the budget.[1] In August 1922 came Lloyd George's famous 'steel-frame' speech. This was followed by the refusal of the Viceroy and the Secretary of State to agree to the recommendation of Lord Willingdon, the Governor of Madras, that in view of the success of the reforms in his province, it should be granted full responsible government; and the appointment of the Lee Commission in spite of universal Indian opposition. The Liberals were convinced that a new breeze had begun to blow at Whitehall [2] and Simla. Soon after Montagu's resignation, most of the Liberals walked out of the provincial ministries, inveighing against the unworkability of the dyarchic system and the changed attitude of the officials. The Liberal honeymoon with the Government was over. Most non-official witnesses before the Muddiman Enquiry Committee in 1924

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1. The Times, 23 March 1922.
2. That this conviction was not wholly baseless is proved by the following entry in the diary of the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Rawlinson: 'The fact is that the Home Government, having introduced the Reform schemes, are now afraid they are going too fast. They are trying to put on the brake, and the machine is inclined to run away from them. But we must either trust the Indian or not trust him. The schemes have got to be carried out honestly in their entirety, with a view to eventual Dominion self-government, or else we must return to the old method of ruling India by the sword. There is no half-way house.' Sir Frederick Maurice, The Life of General Lord Rawlinson, p.307.

testified that the date of Montagu's resignation was the dividing line between the success and the failure of dyarchy.

The Liberal Agitation

Taking a leaf out of the history of the Dominions, especially South Africa, and encouraged by the recent example of Ireland, Mrs. Besant launched a movement for a National Convention towards the end of 1922 in order to frame a constitution for India and negotiate on its basis with the British Government.[1] Prominent Liberals associated themselves with this project, if for no other purpose than to rally all the constitutionalists in the country and exert pressure on the authorities by formulating their demands in a precise form. Their efforts were, however, mainly directed towards demanding an early appointment of the Statutory Commission contemplated in the Act of 1919.

The Liberal Federation at its annual session in December 1922 'earnestly' urged 'the necessity of accelerating the pace for the attainment of complete self-government and towards that end the taking of steps for the immediate introduction of 1) full responsible government in the provinces and

1. Mrs. Besant carried on her campaign for quite some time. The National Convention met several times during the years 1923-25. It drafted a Commonwealth of India Bill, which was introduced in the House of Commons by the Labour leader, George Lansbury, and received its first reading in December 1925. Though Mrs. Besant's campaign proved abortive, it was, in a sense, the precursor of the All-Parties Conference of 1928 and the latter-day demand of the Congress for a Constituent Assembly. For the history of the National Convention see Besant, Indian Problems, pp.136-55; India: Bond or Free, pp.225-46; The India That Shall Be, pp.26-88.

2) responsibility in the Central Government in all departments, except the Military, Political and Foreign'.[1] Sastri, as president of the session, warned the British Government that to be pedantic about the ten-year limit for the appointment of the Statutory Commission would be not only 'inexpedient', but 'a political blunder'.[2] By the middle of 1923 most of the provincial Liberal organisations had changed their creeds so as to include formally the demands for Dominion Status and responsible self-government as early as possible.[3] These demands were also contained in the Liberal manifestos on the forthcoming elections issued in August 1923.[4] At its annual session in December 1923, the Federation modified its creed and declared its object to be 'the attainment by constitutional means, of Swaraj (responsible self-government) and Dominion Status for India at the earliest possible date'.[5] It reiterated its earlier demands for political advance and the early appointment of the Statutory Commission. These demands the Liberals continued to press upon the authorities, both inside the legislature and outside, in subsequent years.

The Liberals and Dominion Status

The Liberal leaders were fairly well acquainted with Imperial history and closely watched developments in intra-Commonwealth relations. Their familiarity with the literature on the subject of the development of responsible government

1. The Indian Annual Register, 1923, vol.i, pp.912 -3.
2. Ibid. p.905.
3. The Indian Annual Register, 1923, vol.ii, pp.115-20.
4. Ibid. pp.109-12.
5. The Indian Annual Register, 1923, Supplement, p.279.

in the Dominions may indeed seem remarkable to-day. They represented India at the Imperial Conferences and had close personal contacts with Imperial statesmen. They had thus opportunities for learning and becoming convinced that Dominion Status could give India everything politically that any proud and self-respecting nation could care to achieve. They knew that Dominion Status was not a static but a dynamic concept, and that even since the Imperial Conference of 1917 it had been widened and enlarged to mean virtual independence both in the internal and international spheres. What had satisfied the recalcitrant nationalism of the Boers and the Irish, they believed, should certainly satisfy Indian nationalists, who were still struggling not for the forms but the substance of political power. Any doubts that they might have had in the matter were laid to rest after the publication of the Balfour Committee Report in 1926. Chintamani remarked at the 1926 session of the Federation that what the Liberals asked for was that 'Dominion Status on the lines laid down by the Imperial Conference should be accorded to India', and he added that 'Statesmen like Hertzog who had previously stood for separation went back to South Africa and told the Boers that they need no longer be dissatisfied with their position in the British Empire'.[1] The Balfour Report became a weapon in the hands of the Liberals in their fight against those nationalists who demanded complete independence. Dominion Status, they urged, was virtual independence. They condemned

1. The Indian Quarterly Register, 1926, vol.ii, p.351.

the loose talk of complete independence because it was impracticable, alienated friends and strengthened the hands of reactionaries in England, caused a division amongst their ranks in India, and thus did nothing but harm to the cause of India's political progress. The Liberals did not subscribe to the theory that Dominion Status could be used as a stepping-stone to complete independence. They believed that Dominion Status was desirable in itself. 'The Liberals believed,' said Ramaswami Aiyer, 'that there was nothing to lose but a great deal to gain by remaining within the British Commonwealth of Nations.'[1] 'Dominion Status', said Chimanlal Setalvad in 1928, 'meets all national aspirations and carries with it the protection, safety and all other advantages of partnership in the most powerful Empire in the world.'[2] The Liberals claimed that even as an ideal Dominion Status was higher than that of isolated freedcm, for it associated India on free and equal terms with the freest and most progressive nations of the world.

Nor did the Liberals demand Dominion Status at once. They demanded it 'without undue delay'.[3] 'What the Liberal Party wanted to-day,' said Sapru in 1929, 'was a constitution giving Dominion Status automatically, without periodical enquiries.'[4] The Liberal Federation at its annual

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1. The Indian Review, January 1929, p.41; The Times of India, 24 December 1928.
2. The Indian Quarterly Register, 1928, vol.ii, p.386.
3. P.C.Sethna; The Indian Quarterly Register, 1929, vol.ii, p. 320.
4. The Indian Quarterly Register, 1929, vol.ii, p.322.

session in December 1929 demanded by a formal resolution the immediate enactment of 'a constitution based on Dominion Status with such safeguards and reservations as may be necessary for the period of transition'.[1] The statement issued by the Federation at this very session emphasised repeatedly that what the Liberals aimed at was 'Dominion Status for India, not as a distant goal or ideal, but capable of achievement within the shortest possible limit of time' and that they were prepared to accept all 'such safeguards and reservations .... as might be necessary in the present conditions of India for the period of transition'.[2] This was also the demand of moderate Congressmen.

Lord Irwin was, therefore, correct when he wrote in November 1929 that there was 'a fundamental distinction between the general political thought of Great Britain and India' in the discussion of the term Dominion Status. To the Englishman, he said, the phrase Dominion Status meant 'a constitutional state enjoyed within the Empire by a political entity over which His Majesty's Government retain no right of supervisory interference'. To the Indian it meant 'something different', for very few responsible Indians ignored the fact that complete Dominion Status in this sense was not possible for at least some time to come. 'Whatever he may feel it necessary to say in public,' wrote Irwin, 'the Indian is not so much concerned with the achieved constitutional state, in

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1. Ibid. p.323.
2. Ibid. pp.324-5.

the British sense, as he is with what he would consider the indefeasible assurance of such an achievement.' 'In all the constitutional discussions of the last two years,' Irwin added, 'the underlying element in much of Indian political thought seems to have been the desire that, by free conference between Great Britain and India, a constitution should be fashioned which may contain within itself the seed of full Dominion Status, growing naturally to its full development in accordance with the particular circumstances of India, without the necessity - the implications of which the Indian mind resents - of further periodical enquiries by way of Commission.'[1]

The Liberals and the Problem of Defence

The Liberals were the most formidable critics of British military policy in India and considered it to be 'the test of test for the bona fides of the British Government'.[2] They demanded for the Government of India the same autonomy in military affairs which the Dominion governments enjoyed. They registered a vigorous protest against the underlying assumption of the Esher Committee Report (1920) that the army in India could not be considered 'otherwise than as part of the total armed forces of the Empire',[3] and against its recommendations intended to enable the War Office and the Imperial

1. Irwin's 'Note on Dominion Status as understood in Great Britain and India', November 1929; reproduced in A.C. Johnson, Viscount Halifax, pp.231-4. See also the Earl of Halifax, Fulness of Days, pp. 121-2.
2. Srinivasa Sastri, 27 December 1922; The Indian Annual Register, 1923, vol.i, p.896.
3. Cmd. 943, p.3.

General Staff 'to exercise a considerable influence on the military policy of the Government of India'.[1] They feared that the acceptance of its recommendations would mean an increase in the already excessive military expenditure in India and result in 'making the War Office in England close its tentacles over the Army and the Military Department in India'[2] and condemn their country to remain a dependency for ever. At the annual session of the party in December 1920,[3] in the press and in Legislative Assembly in 1921,[4] Liberal spokesmen insisted that the army in India should remain entirely under the control, real as well as nominal, of the Government of India and any coordination between the military policies and organisations of different parts of the Empire should be secured, as in the case of the Dominions, by discussions and agreement at conferences at which India was adequately represented.

The Liberals were convinced that quite a substantial part of the British army in India was maintained at India's expense for Imperial purposes. They demanded that it should be either withdrawn or paid for by the Imperial Government. They insisted that the numerical strength of the army in India should be determined in accordance with India's needs and be commensurate with her financial capacity. The primary

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1. Ibid. p.4.
2. Sivaswamy Aiyer, 17 February 1921; Legislative Assembly Debates, 1921, vol.i, pt.1, p.186.
3. Report of the Proceedings of the Third Session of the National Liberal Federation of India, 1920, pp.43-69.
4. Legislative Assembly Debates, 1921, vol.i, pt.1, pp.182-97 660-4; pt.ii, pp.1447-51, 1683-1762.

purpose of the army in India, they asserted, must be, as it was alleged to be, the defence of India against external aggression and the maintenance of internal peace and security. They expressed their willingness to shoulder their part of Imperial obligations, but demanded that these obligations 'should be no more onerous than those resting on the self-governing Dominions, and should be subject to the same conditions as are applicable to those Dominions'. [1]

The Esher Report had assumed that Western Europe would no longer be an armed camp and that the centre of gravity had shifted to the Near and the Middle East, and it had looked forward, with unblushing frankness, to underprop British policy in those regions by the army in India.[2] This provided an easy target for Liberal attack. They accused the British Government of attempting hegemony over the Middle East with the Indian army as its sword and buckler. They protested against the large-scale employment of Indian troops in the Middle East as derogatory to India's position, self-respect and fair name. They demanded that Indian troops should not be used for purposes of offence and 'imperial aggrandisement'.[3] We do not mean, they affirmed, to shirk our Imperial obligations and shall be found in our places when actual danger threatens the Empire, but 'we should be satisfied that those dangers have not been of your seeking,

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1. Ibid. p.197.
2. Cmd. 943, p.3.
3. Legislative Assembly Debates, 1921, vol.i, pt.11, pp.1687, 1782. The number of Indian troops employed in Egypt, Mesopotamia and Persia on 22 February 1921 was 97,700. Ibid. p.1712.

and that it is forced upon us by other Powers, without any provocation. If the United Kingdom wants to play high games of international politics, to dictate the fate of Powers in Europe, to parcel out kingdoms everywhere in the world, or to create or solve problems in the Near or Middle East, to play the saviours of oppressed nationalities or creeds, or to peg out new spheres of influence or to spread the benefits of Western civilisation, then we shall not encourage you by any promise of support with our man power'.[1] This was being said in 1921 by the loyal Liberals in the full knowledge of the fact that the Indian Legislative Assembly had no control whatsoever over military policy or expenditure!

Repeated reminders by British statesmen that India could not hope to achieve responsible government unless and until she was fully capable of self-defence annoyed the Liberals. They asserted that the idea that self-defence was an inseparable attribute of Dominion autonomy was a theory of recent growth and had not been rigorously enforced in the past in the case of the self-governing Dominions, where Imperial troops had continued to stay even after they had achieved responsible government. India, unlike the Dominions, had, ever since the beginning of the British connection, borne every rupee of the military expenditure incurred in maintaining internal order, external security, or in carrying on wars against the Indian States. Britain had never borne any part of the financial burden of India's defence - this

1. Sivaswamy Aiyer, 17 February 1921; Legislative Assembly Debates, 1921, vol.i, pt.1, p.197.

fact, along with the numerous advantages, military, material, moral and political, which the Imperial Government had derived from the possession of India, should, they pleaded, dictate to the British Government a different and more favourable treatment of the Indian problem. Even if there were objections to the continuance of British troops in India after the grant of full responsible government - though they denied their full validity in as much as the British troops were paid for by Indian revenues and were not exactly Imperial troops - there should be none, the Liberals argued, to the continuance of British officers in the Indian army till such time as Indian officers could be trained to replace them, for certainly it was no fault of theirs that India was not in a position to take up the responsibility of her self-defence immediately. After having denied Indians opportunities for military training and admission to the higher ranks in the army as a matter of deliberate policy, in spite of the repeated prayers and protests of Indians to the contrary for at least half a century in the past, it was not fair, they said, to lay down as an axiom that India must first be capable of self-defence, with an Indian army - manned and officered wholly by Indians - before she could claim self-government. It appeared to them to be adding insult to injury.

The Liberals quoted authorities, especially the reports of the Peel Commission (1858 -59) and the Eden Commission (1879), to prove that British military policy in India,

as regards recruitment, the ratio of British to native troops, the exclusion of Indians from the artillery and higher ranks in the army, and general organisation, had been based upon a deep-seated distrust of the people and princes of India and that its one dominating motive had been to provide against the risk of a general uprising in the country. They regretted that the same motive still continued to colour the attitude of the British Government towards the question of the Indianisation of the army. They could not but give way to despair and treat as mere excuses for delay the arguments, such as those advanced by the Commander-in-Chief in 1925, that it was no simple matter to create a national army in India because India was not a nation, that India would not be able to dispense with the services of the British officers 'for many many years to come', and that he would 'resist strenuously' any attempt to hasten the process of Indianisation of the army, for it would undermine its efficiency.[1]

The Liberals did not ask that Britain should continue to defend India indefinitely, but only that arrangements should be made for training Indians - officers and men - to enable them to undertake the burden of India's defence within a reasonable period of time. No words were more often quoted in the frequent debates on this question than those of Montagu, uttered in the House of Commons on 5 December 1919: 'Do not deny to India self-government because she cannot take her proper share in her own self-defence and then deny to her

1. Legislative Assembly Debates, 1925, vol.v, pt.ii, p.1952.

people the opportunity of learning to defend themselves.'[1]

The Liberals appear to have taken the advice of the Home Member, William Vincent,[2] given in 1921, to heart and incessantly demanded that arrangements be made for the rapid Indianisation of the army. They condemned as 'wholly inadequate' the eight-units' scheme of Indianisation adopted by the authorities in 1922. If progress was to be made at this pace, they argued, it would take 200 years before the entire Indian army would be officered by Indians.

The Liberals knew that the British Government were determined not to hand over the control of the Indian army to a responsible government in India - at least not in the near future. To prove, therefore, that they were reasonable, loyal and patient, the Liberals demanded the introduction of responsibility only in the civil adminstration and were content to leave the army, along with foreign affairs and relations with the Indian States, as a reserved subject in the hands of the Governor-General. Dissatisfied, however, with the attitude of the Government in the matter of reduction of army expenditure, the Federation had in 1924 suggested that a fixed amount be allotted towards the same, any additional expenditure requiring the assent of the Legislative Assembly.[3] In 1926 the

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1. 122 H.C.Deb. 5s., col. 836.
2. 'If I had been a non-official member of this Assembly, the one consideration that I would have constantly pressed upon the Government would have been the development of an Indian Army officered by Indians, because on that really rests very largely the future political progress of this country.' Legislative Assembly Debates, 1921, vol. ii, p. 1251.
3. The Indian Quarterly Register, 1924, vol.ii, pp.467-8.

Skeen Committee had recommended 50% Indianisation of the army by 1952, but the vaccilations and delays of the Government of India, first in publishing the report of the Committee and later in accepting its unanimous recommendation, made even the Liberals despair. The Liberal Federation at its annual session in December 1926 demanded that the British Government should make an explicit declaration of their military policy in India and frame a scheme of complete Indianisation 'within a generation at least'.[1] Rather reluctantly, the Liberals were driven to insist that the Government should fix a time-table for the purpose and make an Indian member of the Executive Council responsible for carrying it out.

The Liberal position in regard to the problem of defence as it stood in 1928-29 may be summarised as follows: India should have freedom to organise and administer her military forces like the Dominions. The utilisation of the army in India for purposes extraneous to her defence must be conditional upon the assent of the Indian legislature. In order to carry out a military policy framed with due regard to the national interests of India, the portfolio of defence, which should continue to be treated as a reserved subject for some time, should be entrusted to a non-official Indian member of the Governor-General's Executive Council.

The Liberals and Parliamentary Sovereignty

The Liberals were no doctrinaires. They never adopted a heroic pose by taking a stand on the rock of abstract

1. The Indian Quarterly Register, 1926, vol.ii, pp.344, 349.

principles. The doctrines of national sovereignty and self-determination appealed to them as nationalists, but as practical politicians they never allowed them to get the better of their judgment. Constitutionalists by temperament and mostly lawyers by profession or training, they frankly recognised the ultimate sovereignty of the British Parliament. Anxious to achieve their objectives with the consent and co-operation of the British people, they were always careful not to alienate their sympathies or hurt their amour propre. They had no illusions about the manner in which Parliament fulfilled its responsibilities towards India through the Secretary of State. Parliamentary sovereignty was in practice, they often complained bitterly, the sovereignty of half a dozen men in England and half a dozen men in India. Nor is it difficult to find in their writings and speeches frequent respectful references to freedom being the birth-right of all men and the right of every people to determine the constitution best suited to them. But, as realists, the Liberals never directly or openly challenged the ultimate sovereign authority of Parliament in Indian affairs. Their position was best stated by Sapru when he observed: 'Constitutionally, Parliament is sovereign, and until India has got complete responsible government, it is correct to say that the responsibility for its welfare and advancement lies upon Parliament. But this constitutional position is by no means incompatible with the undoubted right of all subjects of the King to say when and how and on what lines further advance

be secured.'[1]

The Liberals, therefore, did not see any incongruity in supporting the project of a National Convention or the demand for a round table conference. Their preference for a Royal Commission instead of a round table conference, as demanded by the Swarajists, was mainly due to a recognition of the 'need not to neglect British opinion'.[2] A Royal Commission, they argued was 'a thing understood in England', would mean 'no violent departure in agency' and would be 'best able to sift evidence and adjucate conflicting interests'.[3] As Sivaswamy Aiyer remarked, pleading for the immediate appointment of a Royal Commission instead of a round table conference, in the Legislative Assembly in 1924, the principle of self-determination was 'a sacred principle' and every nation had a right to determine for itself the form of government best suited to it, but prudence demanded that the machinery suggested should be 'acceptable to them (the British Government), not offensive to their amour propre'. 'You must provide a dignified passage to a graceful concession,' he added.[4]

The Liberals maintained that though the final authority lay with Parliament, Indians must have an effective voice in framing the future constitution for their country. The Liberal Federation at its Calcutta session in December 1925

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1. Sapru, The Indian Constitution, pp.8-9.
2. Sapru, presidential address to the Indian National Convention, 22 February 1924; The Indian Quarterly Register, 1924, vol.i. , p.74.
3. Srinivasa Sastri, Ibid. p.77.
4. Legislative Assembly Debates, 1924, vol.iv, pt.i., pp.728-9.

reiterated its demand for the immediate appointment of the Statutory Commission and urged that 'Indian opinion should be adequately represented thereon'.[1]

The Liberals had expected that as they were careful not to challenge British rights or wound British susceptibilities, the British Government would be equally considerate in respecting Indian rights and sentiments. In mid-1927, when speculations about the forthcoming Commission were rife and it was being rumoured - even suggested in certain Anglo-Indian circles - that an exclusively British and Parliamentary Commission might be appointed, prominent Liberals had warned the British Government that any such Commission would make no appeal to any section nor carry Indian confidence and support. They had asserted emphatically that Indians must sit on the Commission on equal terms and no provision for coopted members or assessors would satisfy them.[2] 'It is the permanent interests of India that are at stake,' Sapru had remarked in June 1927, 'and Indians must have a natural and moral right to take part in the shaping of their constitution for the future.'[3]

The appointment of an exclusively British Commission in November 1927, despite their warnings and protests, was considered by the Liberals as a deliberate affront to their honour and self-respect as Indians. They felt betrayed and humiliated and decided to boycott the Simon Commission. They

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1. The Indian Quarterly Register, 1925, vol.ii, p.389.
2. The Indian Review, July 1927, p.481; August 1927, pp.529-34.
3. The Englishman, 27 June 1927.

demanded a mixed Commission on which Englishmen and Indians sat on equal terms and no concessions made subsequently to liberalise the procedure of the Commission sufficed to make them alter their decision. Their attitude towards the Commission - repeatedly affirmed during the subsequent period - may be described thus: We accept that constitutionally the final and ultimate authority is Parliament, but this does not mean that the machinery for investigation and making recommendations to Parliament must be exclusively British or Parliamentary. The Act of 1919 did not preclude a mixed Commission. The appointment of an exclusively British agency for exploring the avenues of progress not only condemns Indians to the position of inferiority as petitioners and thus wounds their self-respect, it flagrantly denies the right of the Indian people to participate on equal terms in framing the future constitution for their country. The choice of the personnel of the Commission was destructive of the spirit of mutual confidence which alone could beget cooperation. Neither our self-respect nor our duty to our country allow us to go near the Commission. As Parliament has boycotted us, we too shall have nothing to do with its Commission at any stage, to any extent, or in any form.

The Liberals and the Irwin Declaration of 1929

The Liberals had always taken the announcement of 1917 to mean the promise of Dominion Status for India. In February 1924, however, Sir Malcolm Hailey, the then Home Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, had attempted to draw a subtle

distinction between responsible government and Dominion Status and suggested that the British Government had promised India the former and not the latter. The Liberals had challenged the validity of Hailey's remark and denounced it as hair-splitting. 'If,' said Sapru, 'British statesmen studied their own declarations they would find that they stand committed to Dominion Status.'[1] It was true. But the Liberals were old enough to remember instances in the past when attempts had been made to explain away solemn promises and proclamations in a similar manner by responsible British statesmen. They did not need to ransack the past, for there was a recent instance ready at hand. The manner in which the Act of 1919 had been interpreted in order to appoint a purely Parliamentary Commission in 1927 was enough to arouse Liberal suspicions and underline the necessity for seeking an authoritative re-affirmation of the goal to which the British Government stood committed by their earlier pronouncements. That the issue should be clarified became urgent because of other recent developments also. The Nehru Report had postulated Dominion Status as the immediate goal of India. The younger and more radical elements in the country had declared war on that ideal and the whole country was divided into 'Independence-wallahs' and 'Dominion-Status-wallahs'. The majority was still in favour of the latter. If the country was to be rallied round the idea of Dominion Status, if the trend towards complete independence was to be checked, there was need that the

1. The Indian Quarterly Register, 1928, vol.ii, p.391.

British Government reaffirmed unequivocally that they were pledged to grant India Dominion Status and took early steps towards that end.

The boycott of the Simon Commission had given no joy to the Liberals. Men whose watchword had been cooperation with the Government felt uneasy at being compelled to non-cooperate. The Liberals did not waste their time and effort in organising black-flag demonstrations and shouting 'Simon, Go Back'. They decided to meet the challenge twice thrown down before by Lord Birkenhead to frame a constitution for India, carrying behind it a fair measure of general agreement among the peoples of India. The Nehru Report was the outcome of their initiative and a triumph of Liberal ideals and principles.

Once again a situation similar to that in 1916 had been created. The moderates had been thrown into the arms of the extremists. The Government of India lacked the support and confidence of any reputable element in Indian political life. The 'Simon blunder' had proved to be very costly. But, though the Liberals had been forced to cooperate with the Congress, they soon began to chafe at this marriage of convenience. The extremists had exploited the situation. The Madras Congress in 1927 had declared for independence. And it was with extreme difficulty that Gandhi and Motilal Nehru had been able to secure even a conditional support for the Dominion Status objective of the Nehru Report at the 1928 session of the Congress.

The Viceroy, Lord Irwin, had begun to realise that the

Simon Report stood no chance of public acceptance in India and would only prolong the political deadlock.[1] 'By some means or other contact had to be regained and confidence in British purpose restored.'[2] He was fully aware of the Liberal dilemma and decided 'to get the more reasonable non-cooperators back into the discussion of the next stage of the Reforms'.[3] The Liberals were urging upon the Viceroy, both in public and in private, the necessity of an immediate declaration by the Government that Dominion Status was the goal to which they stood committed by the announcement of August 1917, in order to remove the confusion and uncertainty created by Hailey's remark in 1924, and the summoning of a conference comprising representatives of all sections and interests in India for a comprehensive review of the entire Indian problem in collaboration with the British Government. These steps were necessary, they said, in order to ease the existing tension, to restore confidence in the sincerity and good intentions of the Government, to rally all those political parties and sections that did not profess extreme doctrines, to weaken the movement for independence, and, if possible, to prevent the Congress from acting on the ultimatum given at the Calcutta session in 1928. The coming of the Labour Government to power in England in June 1929 encouraged the Liberals to redouble their efforts. They openly assured that their cooperation was forthcoming in any 'honourable' way out of the

1. Johnson, op.cit. p.218.
2. Halifax, Fulness of Days, p.117.
3. Dawson's memorandum on India, 25 March 1929; Evelyn Wrench, Geoffrey Dawson and our Times, p.272.

present impasse.

The result of these energetic counsels was that the Viceroy, already convinced of the need 'to get at Indian opinion',[1] went home in the summer of 1929, where he held discussions with the Labour Government amd the leaders of other parties and on his return to India issued the historic declaration of 31 October 1929, containing a reaffirmation of the goal of Dominion Status for India as 'implicit in the declaration of 1917' and the proposal for summoning a Round Table Conference.[2]

The Liberals welcomed the announcement as clearing the mists and proposing a satisfactory change in procedure. They also persuaded the moderate leaders of the Congress to join them in doing so. The unfortunate debates in Parliament that followed Irwin's declaration robbed the latter of much of its grace and healing power. The Liberals regretted them, but were wise enough to recognise that they were inspired, in the main, by party spite at Westminster. Though the Congress later stood aloof from the Round Table Conference, because the Viceroy could not give the assurance it asked for, namely, that the proposed Conference would meet to frame a Dominion Status constitution for India, the Liberals boldly stuck to their guns. They were anxious not to let the Viceroy and the Secretary of State down, especially at a time when they had dared so much for the sake of India and thereby invited 'Die-hard' wrath on their heads. They condemned the demand made by

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1. Ibid. p.273.
2. The Times, 1 November 1929.

Gandhi and the Congress for a previous assurance as unreasonable for no government could give it. They were not slow to apprehend the great possibilities of the Round Table Conference, in particular, the renewed opportunity offered to bring pressure to bear on the authorities in the direction of accelerating the development process of British India in association with the Indian States.

At the plenary session of the Round Table Conference, which began on 12 November 1930, Liberal spokesmen declared their fervent and unfaltering conviction in the Commonwealth ideal. They emphasised the gravity of the situation in India, especially as regards the future of Indo-British relations. They characterised the movement for complete independence as 'a cry of despair , distrust and suspicion'.[1] They appealed to British justice, generosity and statesmanship for the early grant of Dominion Status to India, with such safeguards and reservations as might be considered necessary during the period of transition. 'Take your courage in your hands;' Sapru told the British Statesmen, 'provide as many safeguards as you can, so long as those safeguards do not destroy the vital principle, and then go ahead with courage and faith. Courage and faith, together with the common sense of the people of India, will come to your rescue. Their whole future is at stake. But do not say 'You shall march so many paces'. The time has long since passed by when India could be told to hold its soul in patience and to march to that far-off

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1. M.R.Jayakar, Cmd. 3778, p.41.

ideal through the ages. I very respectfully beg of you to change your outlook on the whole situation.'[1] There was a note of urgency, earnestness and expectancy in the speeches of the Liberals at the Conference, almost verging on the pathetic.

1. Cmd. 3778, p.32.

CHAPTER V

THE ALL-INDIA MUSLIM LEAGUE

The All-India Muslim League, 1907-11.

The All-India Muslim League was organised in December 1906. Its two main objectives were 'to promote, among the Mussalmans of India, feelings of loyalty to the British Government' and 'to protect and advance (their) political rights and interests'.[1] Following the lines laid down by the great Muslim leader, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, in the eighties of the last century, the League looked with an eye of disfavour not merely on the Congress methods of agitation, but also upon the Congress ideal of self-government for India on the Colonial model. Nawab Viqar-ul-Mulk, one of the prominent leaders of the League, advised the youth of his community early in 1907 to keep away from the Congress as the objectives of the latter were against their interests. In a self-governing India, with representative institutions, he said, the majority would dominate and the minority would suffer.[2] The president of the League session of 1908, Saiyid Ali Imam, declared that the Congress and the League differed fundamentally. He denounced the Congress ideal of self-government as impracticable idealism, tending to promote extremism and disloyalty.[3] 'Throughout the troubled years 1907-10,' says the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, 'the Muhammadans, with a few

1. M. Noman, Muslim India, p.78.
2. Ibid. pp.99-100.
3. V. Lovett, A History of the Indian Nationalist Movement, pp.91-2.

unimportant exceptions, held severely aloof from the revolutionary movement, and retained their traditional attitude of sturdy loyalty, secure in the feeling - which the partition of Bengal and the concession of communal representation in the reforms of 1909 had strengthened - that their interests were safe in the hands of the Govern - ment.[1] But, it added, 'since 1911 their attitude has been growing far less quiescent',[2] and went on to enumerate the causes which contributed to this change.

Muslim Unrest

Though the year 1911 is generally recognised as marking a turning-point in the Muslim attitude towards the British Government, it is not difficult to detect signs of the coming change earlier. Indian Muslims, like their co-religionists elsewhere, had been affected by the Pan-Islam movement which began towards the end of the 19th century.[3] Through its emphasis on the solidarity of Islam and opposition to Western encroachments on Muslim States, Pan-Islamism came to acquire an anti-Christian and anti-imperialist character. In May 1906 Minto wrote to Morley: 'There is, as you no doubt know, a Pan-Islamic movement working in India in no friendly sense towards our rule.'[4] Events in other Muslim States also found their echo in Muslim India. The

1. Cd. 9109, p.22.
2. Ibid.
3. H. Kohn, A History of Nationalism in the East, pp.48-9.
4. Minto to Morley, 9 May 1906.

nationalist movement in Egypt, the grant of a parliamentary constitution in Persia in 1907 and the Young Turk revolt in Turkey in 1908 exercised their influence upon young Muslim minds in India. With the growth of Western education amongst the Muslims, the sympathies of the younger generation naturally turned towards the Congress and the nationalist movement. 'Young educated Mohammedans seem to have a sympathy for the Congress,' complained Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk, the secretary of the Aligarh College, in 1906 to the principal of the institution.[1] It was a sign of the times that the Aga Khan was, towards the end of 1905, in favour of Muslims joining the Congress,[2] that the young Mohammad Ali Jinnah acted as the private secretary to Dadabhai Naoroji and attended the Congress session at Calcutta in 1906, and that a Muslim barrister, A.Rasul, took a prominent part in the anti-partition agitation in Bengal. It was during this period that the young Mohammad Iqbal wrote his famous patriotic poems, singing the glories of the motherland, lamenting for its fallen state, and inviting men of different creeds in his country to worship in a 'New Temple'. Similarity of education, commented the Aga Khan a little later, had contributed towards the creation of a similar outlook amongst the educated Hindus and Muslims, and 'influenced the increasing approximation of political views and sentiments amongst educated men of

1. Mohsin-ul-Mulk to W.Archbold, 4 August 1906: encl.Minto to Morley, 8 August 1906.
2. The Aga Khan disclosed this fact in 1927. See The Times of India, 30 December 1927.

different communities' in India.[1]

It was, however, not English education, but English foreign policy, which shook the foundations of Muslim loyalty to the British Government in India. One of the main considerations which had made the Indian Muslims loyal to the British Raj was that the latter was friendly towards the Muslim States, especially Turkey. The continued deterioration in the relations between England and Turkey ever since the last decade of the 19th century had given them cause for anxiety. The Muslims in India had always been suspicious of what they considered to be the anti-Turkish bias of the Liberal Party in England. They were seriously disturbed when that party came into power in England at the end of 1905. In 1906 a controversy developed in India over what should be the attitude of the Muslims in case a war broke out between England and Turkey.[2] There was one school which maintained that the Muslim's primary allegiance and loyalty were to the Sultan of Turkey as the Khalifa of Islam. Mian Fazl-i-Husain, for example, asserted that in the event of a war between England and Turkey 95 per cent of the followers of the Prophet in India would repudiate allegiance to the British Crown.[3] Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk, on whom had fallen the mantle of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, challenged the view that the Khalifa was in any way the ruler of the Muslims. The Muslims of India, he

1. The Aga Khan, 'The Indian Moslem Outlook', The Edinburgh Review, January 1914, p.9.
2. The Times, 16 August 1906.
3. Cited in Joseph Chailley, Administrative Problems of British India, p.76.

wrote, were full of sympathy and reverence for the Sultan and wished with one heart for the stability of the Turkish Empire, but they were the subjects of the King-Emperor and owed allegiance to him alone. The Nawab earnestly prayed that friendly relations between Great Britain and the Porte might be firmly established, but added that should there be a war between the British Government and any Muslim power 'we should, as loyal subjects, be on the side of our own Government, but, as Mohammedans, we should also be sad about it'.[1] The Nawab had very correctly expressed the attitude of the vast majority of Muslims in India over the issue.

The course of British foreign policy continued to aggravate the anxieties of the Indian Muslims. They frankly disliked the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, for it disturbed their traditional belief that Russia was the enemy and Turkey the friend of the British Government. In 1911, when Italy went to war with Turkey over Tripoli and Great Britain remained neutral the Muslims in India felt aggrieved. 'It appeared to our Muslims in India,' commented the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, 'that in deference to the religious susceptibilities of her seventy million subjects Great Britain ought to have supported Turkey.'[2]

Events in India also added to the dissatisfaction of the Muslims. The revocation of the partition of Bengal in

1. The Times, 16 August 1906; Chirol, 'Pan-Islamism', Proceedings of the Central Asian Society, 14 November 1906, pp. 15-6.
2. Cd. 9109, p.22.

November 1911 came as a rude shock to them. Eastern Bengal was a predominantly Muslim province and its reamalgamation with Bengal was naturally resented by the Muslims. Nawab Viqar-ul-Mulk wrote that the action of the Government in reversing the partition had proved conclusively that no reliance could be placed on its plighted word. He also referred to the feelings of disappointment and disillisionment caused amongst the Muslims by the Government's decision and their drift towards the Congress. 'The result is,' he wrote, 'that some educated Muslims have begun to say that it is not in Muslim interest to keep aloof from the Hindus. They suggest that we should say 'Goodbye' to the Muslim League and join the Indian National Congress - and this is what the Congress has been after for many years.' The Nawab, however, considered this to be a counsel of despair. 'It is true,' he remarked, 'that many a time disappointment points the way to suicide,.....but suicide is never advisable.' He dissuaded his community from joining the Congress, for, as he pointed out: 'The Swaraj of the Congress is fatal to the Mussalmans. The disappearance of the British Government from or even any decrease of its influence in India would be a calamity for us.'[1]

Early in 1912 Russia, now the friend of England, perpetrated massacres in Persia. The event shocked the Muslims in India. The cry of 'Islam in danger' was raised.

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1. Lal Bahadur, The Muslim League, p.87; A.H.Albiruni, Makers of Pakistan and Modern Muslim India, pp. 110-1.

It was exploited by certain radical Muslims for anti-British purposes. Shibli Nomani had observed: 'For the last thirty years, efforts have been made to uplift the Muslims in the name of nationhood, but the failure of these efforts is only too obvious. The followers of the Prophet do not respond to the call of nationhood. Appeal to them in the name of religion and you will see what a splendid response you get.'[1] This is exactly what Zafar Ali Khan through his paper, the Zamindar, and Abul Kalam Azad through his Al-Hilal attempted to do. Pan-Islamism and nationalism became allies. Azad strongly advocated a change in the objectives of the Muslim League so as to bring it into line with the nationalist movement in India, for, according to him, there was no conflict between Islam and sympathy with Islamic countries on the one hand, and Indian nationalism on the other. Azad's preaching to the Muslims to give up subservient politics fell upon ready ears. The Balkan War in 1912 had caused wide-spread anxiety amongst the Muslims in India. Following upon the conquest of Morocco by France, the seizure of Bosnia-Herzegovina by Austria, the declaration of independence by Bulgaria, and the Italian brigandage in Tripoli, the Balkan War confirmed them in their belief that there was a sinister conspiracy amongst the Western countries to dismember and swallow Turkey. The sentiment of cohesion, always strong amongst the Muslims, blazed into a rapid flame. The Balkan War came to be regarded

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1. Albiruni, op.cit. pp. 126-7.

as 'a struggle between the Cross and the Crescent',[1] 'the ultimatum of Europe's temporal aggression'.[2] Poets and writers, religious and political leaders vied with one another in arousing sympathy for the cause of Turkey and Islam. Funds were raised to support Turkey and prayers offered in mosques for her success. A medical mission, led by Dr. M.A. Ansari, was despatched to her aid in December 1912. In the summer of 1913 a new organisation, the Anjuman-i-Khuddam-i-Kaaba, was founded, whose members took an oath to sacrifice life and property in defence of the holy shrine against non-Muslim aggression. Its secretary, Shaukat Ali, also planned to send volunteers to fight for Turkey.[3] How profoundly the Muslims of India were disturbed by the Balkan War and the reverses of Turkey may be gleaned from a curious fact in the life of Mohamed Ali. When the news reached India in the autumn of 1912 that the Bulgars were only 25 miles from the city of Constantinople, Mohamed Ali in his helpless rage and sorrow attempted to commit suicide.[4]

The Expanded Outlook

It was in these circumstances that the advanced section of the Muslims found it easy to push the Muslim League nearer to the Congress. Even the conservative Muslims favoured rapprochement with the Hindus in order to put pressure on the British Government to modify its anti-Turkish policy. Meeting

1. Cd. 9109, p.22.
2. Mohamed Ali, My Life: A Fragment, p.57.
3. Lal Bahadur, op.cit. p.89.
4. Mohamed Ali, My Life: A Fragment, pp.49-50.

at Lucknow on 31 December 1912, under the presidency of the Aga Khan, the Council of the League passed a resolution which recommended that the aims of the League should be:

'1) To promote and maintain among Indians feelings of loyalty towards the British Crown;

'2) To protect and advance the political and other rights and interests of the Indian Mussalmans;

'3) To promote friendship and union between the Mussalmans and other communities of India; and

'4) Without detriment to the foregoing objects the attainment of a system of self-government suitable to India by bringing about, through constitutional means, a steady reform of the existing system of administration by promoting national unity and fostering public spirit among the people of India; and by cooperating with other communities for the said purposes.[1]

The League at its annual session held in March 1913 at Lucknow, under the chairmanship of Muhammad Shafi, ratified the change in the creed of the organisation as recommended by its Council. Due to the influence of the advanced section and the efforts of certain peace-makers like Jinnah [2] and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, the League also passed a resolution expressing 'its firm belief that the future development and progress of the people of India depend on the harmonious working and cooperation of the various communities' and its hope 'that leaders on both

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1. The Indian Review, January 1913, p.54.
2. Jinnah was not yet a member of the Muslim League. He attended the League session in March 1913 as a guest.

sides will periodically meet together to find a modus operandi for joint and concerted action in the questions of public good'.[1] But it was not yet quite the victory of the advanced party. A proposal, that the League should adopt the Congress goal of Colonial self-government, made by a Congress Muslim, Mazhar-ul-Haq, found little favour. The League leaders were in no mood to accept the principle of numerical representation which parliamentary democracy of the Colonial type would lead to. Shafi remarked: 'The adoption of the alternative proposal put forward by some of our friends that the League should set up Colonial form of government in India as its ultimate goal is, in my opinion, inadmissible as well as politically unsound. The political conditions, internal and external, prevailing in the British Colonies have no analogy whatsoever with those obtaining in India.....'[2] It was, however, clear that the League had drawn closer to the Congress. The secretary of the League, Wazir Hasan, remarked: 'The ideal of self-government which the All-India Muslim League has placed on its programme is an important step towards the formation of that great nationality for the building of which all Indians are aspiring.' He added that 'the progress of their common motherland must depend on a hearty cooperation among all peoples' and that 'when once the two communities shared the same temper as regards Western education, and the educational disparity

1. Noman, op.cit. p.128.
2. Muhammad Shafi, The Indian Constitutional Reforms, pp.5-6.

between them was removed, national unity would be assured'.[1]

Nawab Syed Mohammed, the president of the annual session of the Congress held at Karachi in December 1913, hailed the resolutions of the League as 'a happy sign of the advancing times'. Referring to the criticism of the Congress ideal of Colonial self-government made by Shafi, he remarked that the term Colonial self-government was in no way restrictive. It was, he said, definite only in one respect, that it affirmed and proclaimed 'the acceptance of the unalterable and necessary conditions of British supremacy'. 'In my opinion,' he concluded, 'both the ideals are identical and I do not find any substantial difference in them, but only a difference in language..... (for) it goes without saying that no Colonial form of self-government can do good to India which is not modified by and adjusted to the conditions of this country.'[2] By a formal resolution the 1913 Congress expressed 'its warm appreciation of the adoption by the All-India Muslim League of the ideal of self-government for India within the British Empire' and endorsed the plea of the League for harmonious cooperation between the two communities.[3]

The First World War and The Muslims

The outbreak of the First World War further exacerbated Muslim opinion in India. When Turkey entered the war against England in November 1914 Indian Muslims were placed in a very

1. Quoted by Nawab Syed Mohammed at the 1913 session of the Congress. See Report of the twenty-eighth Indian National Congress, 1913, pp. 38-9.
2. Report of the twenty-eighth Indian National Congress, 1913, p. 37.
3. Ibid. p.10.

awkward situation. The Government of their King-Emperor was fighting against that of their Khalifa, They regretted the choice of the Turk and loyally supported the British Government, but in their hearts they remained uneasy about the fate of Turkey and sympathised with her. The public assurances given by His Majesty's Government, that the question of the Khilafat was one which must be decided by Muslims without interference from non-Muslim powers, served to steady Muslim opinion in India to a large extent. Only a few Pan-Islamists, like the Ali brothers (Mohamed Ali and Shaukat Ali), Azad and Zafar Ali Khan, openly avowed pro-Turkish sentiments. They were interned and their papers were suppressed.

The Muslim uneasiness about Turkey and the impact of the new ideas generated by the war gave an opportunity to the pro-Congress elements within the League to push the Congress-League rapprochement initiated in 1912-13 a step further. The 1915 session of the League was held at Bombay simultaneously with that of the Congress. It was presided over by a prominent Congressite, Mazhar-ul-Haq. 'We must have independence and open our eyes in fresh air,' demanded the president of the League, and added, 'Unless and until India has got a national government and is governed for the good of the Indian people, I do not see how she can be contented.'[1] The young, ardent Leaguers showed themselves more enthusiastic than the older Congress leaders for Mrs. Besant's plans to start the

1. The Times of India, 31 December 1915.

Home Rule movement.[1] The League passed a resolution, moved by Jinnah, to set up a committee in order to draft a scheme of post-war reforms in consultation with the Congress.[2] The famous Congress League Scheme of 1916 was the result of the joint deliberations inaugurated at this session. The League had been emancipated from its old policy and began to flow with the current of nationalist agitation in India.

Presiding over the 1916 session of the League at Lucknow, Jinnah pointed out how the League had outgrown its original communal outlook and stood abreast of the Congress, 'ready to participate in any patriotic efforts for the advance of the country as a whole'. He hailed 'the Hindu-Muslim rapprochement' as 'the first great sign of the birth of united India'. As regards self-government for India, Jinnah remarked: 'It should be made clear by the Government in an authoritative manner that self-government is not a mere distant goal that may be attained at some future indefinite time, but that self-government for India is the definite aim and object of the Government to be given to the people within a reasonable time.' Jinnah referred to the possibility of the reconstruction of the Empire and the formation of an Imperial Parliament or Council and warned the Government that India would never suffer to be ruled by the Dominions. He demanded that 'India's right should be recognised and her voice in that Imperial Parliament must be fully and properly secured and represented

1. M.S.Kamath, The Home Rule Leagues, p.27.
2. The Times of India, 31 December 1915.

by her own sons'. The news of the revolt of the Sherif of Mecca against the Sultan of Turkey in June 1916 had profoundly disturbed the Muslims, and it was generally believed that his rebellion had been instigated by the British. Jinnah warned the British Government not to interfere with the future of the Khilafat. He claimed that the feelings and sentiments of the Muslims in India, relating to their most cherished traditions, should receive consideration in the general policy of the Empire. 'The loyalty of the Mussalmans of India,' he added, 'is no small asset.' [1]

The League and the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms

The League and the Congress continued to speak and act in unison during the subsequent five or six years. They combined to put pressure on the authorities for a declaration of policy and welcomed it when it was made. They presented a joint address to the Secretary of State and the Viceroy in November 1917 demanding, among other things, the immediate adoption of the Congress-League Scheme, the fixation of a time-limit for the grant of complete self-government to India, and a place of equality for India with the Dominions in any re-organisation of the Empire. These demands were reiterated at the annual session of the League held at Calcutta in December 1917.[2] Presiding over this session, the Raja of Mahmudabad remarked: 'The interests of the country are paramount. We need not tarry to argue whether we are Muslims first or Indians.

1. M.H.Saiyid, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, pp. 874 ff.
2. The Times of India, 1 January 1918.

The fact is that we are both, and to us the question of precedence has no meaning.'[1] Jinnah, speaking at the same session, dismissed the fears of Hindu domination in a self-governing India as imaginary, a bogey raised by their enemies 'to frighten you, to scare you, away from cooperation and unity which are essential for the establishment of self-government'. 'This country,' he added, 'has not to be governed by the Hindus, and let me submit, that it has not to be governed by the Mussalmans either and certainly not by the English. It is to be governed by the people and the sons of the country. I standing here, I believe I am voicing the feeling of whole India, demand the immediate transfer of a substantial power of the government of the country.'[2]

When the Montagu-Chelmsford Report was published early in July 1918, prominent leaders of the League voiced their dissatisfaction with its proposals on grounds exactly similar to those of their counterparts in the Congress. The condemnation of the principle of communal representation contained in the Report gave them an added cause for anxiety. At an extraordinary session of the League held at Bombay on 31 August and 1 September 1918 to consider the Report, Sir Fazulbhoy Currimbhoy observed that the reform scheme showed a gratuitous want of confidence and distrust of representative assemblies and individual Indians.[3] The Raja of Mahmudabad traced 'the

1. The Times, 8 January 1918.
2. The Indian Review, January, 1918, p.8.
3. The Times of India, 2 September, 1918.

sinister shadow of Mr. Lionel Curtis' athwart the reform scheme.[1] In resolutions echoing the language and spirit of the Congress, the League pronounced the reform proposals to be disappointing and unsatisfactory and urged substantial modifications therein. The main demands of the League were: the transfer of all subjects, except law and order, in the provinces; the introduction of responsibility at the centre; the grant of fiscal autonomy to India; the retention of separate electorates; and the declaration of fundamental rights.[2] At its annual session in December 1918 the League, like the Congress, went further. It insisted that complete responsible government be granted to the provinces at once, and the principle of self-determination be applied to India.[3] The League delegates, Jinnah and Yakub Hasan, reiterated these demands before the Joint Select Committee in August 1919.[4] The League, like the Congress, pronounced the Act of 1919 'inadequate and unsatisfactory', but decided to work it in order to achieve self-government as early as possible.[5]

The Khilafat Movement

All through the war Muslim India had remained apprehensive about the probable fate of Turkey. Many believed that Turkey had been duped by Germany to throw in her lot with the latter, and they were not without hope that their loyal co-operation with the British Government would at least secure a

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. The Times of India, 2 January 1919.
4. H.C. 203, vol.ii, pp.208-30.
5. The Times of India, 3 January 1920.

not-too-severe punishment for Turkey. The assurances given by responsible British statesmen about the holy places and the future of the Turkish Empire had encouraged them in that hope. When at the end of the war rumours about the secret wartime agreements and the proposed harsh terms to Turkey got abroad, the Muslims in India felt that they had been deceived. Indian troops, of which the Muslims formed a fair proportion, had taken a prominent part in the campaigns against Turkey. There was a feeling of guilt and shame in numerous Muslim hearts when they reflected on how their men and money had gone to bring about the downfall of the Khalifa's empire. Representations began to be made to the British Government to treat Turkey leniently in deference to the services and sentiments of the loyal Muslims of India.

The Khilafat movement began in a perfectly loyal manner. At the annual session of the League in December 1918 it was urged that the British Government possessing the largest Muslim empire should sympathise with the feelings of the Indian Muslims regarding Turkey and the sacred places of Islam. In a long and interesting resolution the League said, that 'Having regard to the fact that the Indian Mussalmans take a deep interest in the fate of their co-religionists outside India and that the collapse of the Muslim powers of the world is bound to have an adverse influence on the political importance of the Mussalmans in the country and the annihilation of the military powers of Islam in the world, cannot but have a

far-reaching effect on the minds of even the loyal Mussalmans of India, the All-India Muslim League considers it to be its duty to place before the Government of India and His Majesty's Government the true sentiments of the Muslim community and requests that the British representatives at the Peace Conference will use their influence and see that in the territorial and political redistribution to be made the fullest consideration should be paid to the requirements of the Islamic law with regard to the full and independent control by the Sultan of Turkey, Khalifa of the Prophet, over the holy places and over the Jazirat-ul-Arab as delineated in Muslim books.

'The League further hopes that in determining the political relations of the Empire for the future His Majesty's Ministers shall pay the fullest consideration to the universal and deep sentiment of the Musslamans of India that resolute attempts should be made to effect a complete reconciliation and lasting concord between the Empire and Muslim States based on terms of equity and justice in the interests alike of the British Empire and the Muslim World.'[1]

In 1919 a Khilafat Conference was organised to rally the Muslim community in India in favour of these demands and exert pressure on the Government. Some of the radical and more bigoted elements amongst the Muslims began to talk of jihad and hijrat in case the British Government did not abandon their anti-Turkish policy. Others sought the advice of Gandhi, the rising star in the Indian political sky. The

1. The Times of India, 2 January 1919.

still moderate and loyal Mahatma advised the Muslims not to lose their faith in the British Government and carry on their agitation in a loyal and temperate manner. 'But what shall we do,' asked the Muslims, 'in case the British Government did not concede our demands?' 'Then,' replied the Mahatma, 'remain non-violent, but cease to cooperate with the Government.' Thus was the idea of non-violent non-cooperation mooted tentatively for the first time at the Khilafat Conference at Delhi on 23 November 1919.[1] The harsh terms of the Treaty of Sèvres with Turkey in May 1920 caused widespread gloom and indignation amongst the Muslims in India. Lloyd George had not redeemed even his 'pledge' of 5 January 1918.[2] On 22 June 1920 a representation signed by prominent Muslim leaders of India was presented to the Viceroy. It condemned the peace terms proposed to Turkey as a violation of the religious sentiments of the Muslims and contrary to the assurances given by British statesmen in the past. It pointed out that the British Empire, being 'the greatest Mohammedan Power' could not treat Turkey, representing Khilafat, as a defeated enemy. It appealed to the Viceroy to secure a revision of the peace terms or, in case he failed to get this done, to make common cause with the Indian Muslims, with whose just demands he apparently sympathised. 'We venture respectfully to

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1. Young India, 3 December 1919; Gandhi, An Autobiography, pp. 401-2.
2. 'Nor are we fighting to deprive Turkey of its capital, or of the rich and renowned lands of Asia Minor and Thrace, which are predominantly Turkish in race.' The Times, 7 January 1918.

suggest,' said the signatories to the representation, 'that had India been a Dominion enjoying full self-government, her responsible ministers would have, as a matter of course, resigned as a protest against such a serious breach of pledges and flouting of religious opinions as are involved in the peace terms.' If the Government of India did neither of these two things by 1 August 1920, they intimated taking recourse to progressive non-violent non-cooperation. They denied that their decision implied any disloyalty or lack of respect towards the authorities. 'We claim,' they observed, 'to be as loyal subjects of the Crown as any in India. But we consider our loyalty to an earthly sovereign to be subservient to our loyalty to Islam.'[1]

The Muslims of India had posed questions which vitally affected the continuance of the British Raj in India and the conduct of Imperial foreign policy. They asserted that they could not give their loyalty to a government which was inimical to Islam or Islamic countries. They also asserted - in so many words - that the British Empire was as much Muslim as British, and that its foreign policy could not be dictated merely by the governing classes of British birth and Christian faith. They claimed that the interests and sentiments of the 70 million Muslims of India were as much entitled to be heard as those of any other part of the Empire. A manifesto issued by the Khilafat Conference in 1920 remarked: 'The policy of the British Government has been definitely stated to be that

1. Young India, 23 June 1920.

of making India an equal partner. Recent events have awakened India to a sense of her dignity. In these circumstances, the British Empire, as one consisting of free nationalities, can only hold together if the just and fair demands of each component part of the Empire, in regard to matters which are of concern to a large section of its people, are adequately satisfied. It is therefore urged that the British ministers are bound not merely to press the Muslim, or rather the Indian, claim before the Supreme Council, but to make it their own.'[1] There was material enough in these demands to give cause for reflection to those in England whose hearts were set upon a common foreign policy for a federated Empire.

The Muslim demand for a revision of the treaty with Turkey - powerfully backed by the Government of India and the India Office [2]- continued to be a complicating factor in Imperial politics for quite some time. Lloyd George and Curzon resented dictation by and on behalf of the Indian Muslims. They even got rid of Montagu, who was over-conscientious and zealous in supporting the Muslim demand. But the Muslim sentiments regarding Turkey, however unreasonable, could not be neglected with impunity. In September 1922 when the British Government threatened to go to war with Turkey over the Chanak incident, the Viceroy warned the home

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1. Foreign Affairs, July 1920, special supplement.
2. Ronaldshay, The Life of Lord Curzon, vol.iii, pp.285ff; W.S.Churchill, The World Crisis: The Aftermath, p.392; H. Nicolson, Curzon: The Last Phase, pp.99ff., 267ff.

government that in any such contingency India would be 'ungovernable'.[1] The Government of India, voicing the demands of their Muslims, also influenced considerably the making of the final settlement with Turkey at Lausanne in July 1923.[2]

Muslim Extremism

The Khilafat agitation gave an extremely dangerous turn to Muslim politics in India. On 1 August 1920 the Khilafat Conference launched the non-cooperation campaign. At a special session of the Muslim League held at Calcutta on 7 September, Jinnah, as president, made a bitter attack on the authorities. He referred to the Rowlatt Act, the Punjab atrocities and the spoliation of the Ottoman Empire and the Khilafat and asserted that Indians could not rely either on the Government of India or His Majesty's Government to govern the country with justice and humanity or to represent India's voice in matters international. 'One thing there is which is indisputable,' he said, 'and that is that this government must go and give place to complete responsible government.' 'One degrading measure upon another,' he went on, 'disappointment upon disappointment, and injury upon injury, can lead a people to only one end. It led Russia to Bolshevism. It has led Ireland to Sinn Feinism. May it lead India to freedom.' Though he did not wholly approve of Gandhi's programme, Jinnah agreed that there was 'no other course open to the people except to inaugurate the policy of non-cooperation'.[3] The

1. Earl Winterton, Orders of the Day, p.116; Fifty Tumultous Years, p.55.
2. Reading, Rufus Isaacs, vol. ii, p. 232.
3. The Times of India, 9 September 1920.

League, however, voted for Gandhi's programme. The united appeal of Pan-Islamism and nationalism was irresistible.

At its annual session in December 1920 the League changed its creed to fall in line with the Congress. The objects of the League were declared to be: 'the attainment of Swaraj by the people of India by all legitimate and peaceful means; to protect and advance the political, religious and other rights and interests of Indian Mussalmans; to promote friendship and union between Mussalmans and other communities of India; to maintain and promote brotherly relations between the Mussalmans of India and those of other countries throughout the world.'[1] The Khilafat Conference held at Karachi in July 1921 declared it unlawful for any Muslim to serve in the army in India. It reassured the Sultan of Turkey of the allegiance of the Muslims in India to him and threatened the British Government that if the latter fought the Angora government 'directly or indirectly, openly or secretly', the Muslims in India would 'start civil disobedience and establish their complete independence at the next session of the Indian National Congress to be held at Ahmedabad and hoist the flag of the Indian Republic'.[2] The rise of Mustafa Kemal in Turkey and the Egyptian struggle for independence thrilled the hearts of Indian Muslims. When the League assembled at Ahmedabad towards the end of December 1921, its president, Maulana Hasrat Mohani, put forward a long and impassioned

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1. The Times of India, 31 December 1920, 3 January 1921.
2. The Indian Annual Register, 1922, vol.i, pp.238-9.

plea for the declaration of an Indian Republic on 1 January 1922 and the setting-up of a parallel government. Mohani demanded a definition of the word Swaraj and the form it would take in consonance with the desire of the Muslims. He himself advocated 'an Indian Republic on the lines of the United States of America'. He characterised the British Empire as 'the worst enemy of the Muslim countries' and hoped that every decline in its prestige and power would redound to the advantage of the Muslim world. Mohani also desired that no restriction should be imposed regarding the means by which complete independence was to be achieved.[1] His lieutenant, Azad Sobhani, moved a resolution in the Subjects Committee of the League, demanding that the object of the League should be 'the attainment of independence and the destruction of British Imperialism'.[2] The sane, experienced leaders of the League, however, applied a brake to the indiscreet enthusiasm of young fire-brand Pan-Islamists. They defeated Sobhani's resolution in the Subjects Committee and did not allow it to be moved in the open session of the League.[3]

The Muslim League: Swaraj and Safeguards

The Khilafat and the non-cooperation movements, though they both failed disastrously to achieve their avowed objectives, combined to wreck the Montagu experiment. After the exciting events of 1920-22 no party in India was in a mood to

1. The Indian Annual Register, 1922, vol.i, Appendix, pp.68-77.
2. Ibid. p.78.
3. The Times of India, 2 January 1922.

work the dull reforms of 1919. Muslim opinion was no less persistent and strong than Congress or Liberal 'that immediate steps should be taken to establish Swaraj, i.e. full responsible government, by a complete overhauling of the Government of India Act 1919'.[1] The leaders of the League declared themselves to be as ardent Swarajists as any other in India in the 'twenties. But the problem of Swaraj was far more complex for the Muslims than for the Hindus. Their fear of Hindu domination was deep-seated and they were determined to safeguard their individuality and interests. In fact, as the prospect of Swaraj drew nearer, the Muslims began to devote their attention more anxiously to a clear definition and proper security of their position in a future self-governing India.

In 1921 - the peak year of Hindu-Muslim political concord in India - the League president, Mohani, was constrained to remark that, in spite of the existing Hindu-Muslim unity, serious misunderstandings and suspicions persisted between the two communities. The Hindus, he said, had a lurking suspicion that given an opportunity of Muslim invasion of India the Muslims would help the invaders; the Muslims, on the other hand, feared that on the achievement of self-government the Hindus would acquire greater political power and use their numerical superiority to crush the Muslims. Mohani pointed out that in a merely reformed, as contrasted with an independent government, the Muslims would be under

1. Resolution passed at the 1924 session of the League. The Indian Quarterly Register, 1924, vol.I, p.663.

a double subjection - first, to the British Government, and, second, to the Hindu majority. If the English were eliminated, the Muslims would have only the Hindu majority to fear. This latter too could be negatived, Mohani added, if an Indian republic were established on a federal basis similar to that of the United Sates of America. 'For, while,' Mohani argued, the Mussalmans as a whole are in a minority in India yet nature has provided a compensation; the Mussalmans are not in a minority in all the provinces. In some provinces, such as Kashmere, the Punjab, Sind, Bengal and Assam, the Mussalmans are more numerous than the Hindus. In the United States of India the Hindu majority in Madras, Bombay, and the U.P. will not be allowed to overstep the limits of moderation against the Mussalmans.'[1] This interesting solution of the Hindu-Muslim problem continued to be advocated by Mohani in later years, and it profoundly influenced Muslim minds.[2]

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1. The Indian Annual Register, 1922, vol.I, Appendix,pp.71-2.
2. It is tempting to connect this theory of hostages with the latter-day demand for Pakistan. Its implications were foreseen by a Punjabi Hindu, Lajpat Rai, who wrote in 1925: 'Maulana Hasrat Mohani has recently said that the Muslims will never agree to India's having Dominion Status under the British. What they aim at are separate Muslim States in India united with Hindu states under a National Federal Government. He is also in favour of smaller states containing compact Hindu and Muslim populations.' 'But it should be clearly understood,' commented Lajpat Rai, 'that this is not united India. It means a clear partition of India into a Muslim India and a non-Muslim India.' (Saiyid, op.cit.pp.329-30). At the first Round Table Conference Mohamed Ali echoed Mohani's sentiments and emphasised the fact that if there were provinces in which the Hindus were in a majority there were also provinces in which the Muslims were in a majority. 'That gives us our safeguard, for we demand hostages as we have willingly given hostages to Hindus in the other provinces where they form huge majorities.' (Cmd.3778, pp.103-4). While the Round Table Conference was in session in London, Iqbal was unfolding his ideas to the League

(cont. on page 265)

2. (continued)
session at Allahabad in December 1930: 'I would like to see the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single state. Self-government, within the British Empire or without the British Empire, the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim State appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims at least of North-West India.' (W.C.Smith, Modern Islam in India, p.254). Was Jinnah correct when he observed later that the Pakistan idea 'originated in the brain of the late Hazrat Iqbal.' (Jinnah, India's Problem of Her Future Constitution, p.103). Did not Iqbal owe something to his great friend Mohani?

The League at its Lahore session in May 1924 dealt more realistically with the problem of safeguarding Muslim interests in any future constitutional advance. It laid down the 'basic and fundamental principles'[1] of any scheme of Swaraj. These were: the reorganisation of India on a federal basis with full and complete provincial autonomy, the functions of the central government being confined to the minimum matters of common interest; no territorial redistribution to affect the Muslim majority of population in the Punjab, Bengal and the North-West Frontier Province; separate electorates for all elective bodies; full religious liberty; and no measure to be passed in any elective body if opposed by the three-fourths of its Muslim members.[2]

The Heterogeneous League

Throughout the 'twenties the Muslims in India remained predominantly preoccupied with the problem of how best to safeguard their interests in any future political set-up in the country. This made them cease taking any marked interest in the question whether or not India was to remain in the British Commonwealth. It became for them a very secondary question. Jealousy of the Hindus was stronger than antipathy towards the British. It was elementary political prudence on their part not to be carried away by revolutionary zeal and annoy the British Government by talking of going out of the Empire, for they knew full well that if they fell foul of

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1. The Indian Quarterly Register, 1924, vol.1, p.662.
2. Ibid.

the Government they would be thrown to the mercy of the majority community to be treated as best or worst as the latter chose. Nor was the League as yet a mass organisation. Its leadership was in the hands of territorial magnates and upper-middle-class men - loyal and liberal by temperament, and conservative and compromising in politics.

The League ceased to appeal to the right of self-determination for India. It did not take its stand on the birth-right of Indians to be free, nor challenge the right of Parliament to frame a constitution for India. As between a round table conference and the Statutory Commission its preference was for the latter, but it demanded that the Muslim community should be properly represented thereon. Though eager for speedy constitutional advance, like the Swarajists and the Liberals, the League did not subscribe to the uncompromising and wrecking tactics of the Swarajists within the legislatures. In its methods and ideals it closely resembled the Liberal Party. But, though officially the League adopted this moderate and sensible line, there were within its ranks Muslims representing every conceivable shade of political thought in the country. It was, in fact, a microcosm of Muslim - nay, Indian - political life - an odd assortment of loyalists, liberals, nationalists and Pan-Islamists. The loyalists had their leaders in the Aga Khan and Muhammad Shafi, who considered cooperation with the British Government as the greatest safeguard of Muslim interests. They accepted the goal of Dominion Status and trusted the British Govern-

ment to carry the country thereto at a pace it considered wise and safe. The liberals had their leaders in men like Jinnah, Ali Imam and Mahmudabad, whose attitude towards the British connection was similar to that of the Hindu liberals like Sapru, Sivaswamy Aiyer and Setalvad. The nationalist Muslims like the nationalists in the Congress, to which body they in fact belonged, could be divided into two groups. Those of the older generation - men like Ajmal Khan, Azad and Ansari - were of the same view as the Hindu Congress leaders of their age-group, that Dominion Status was good enough if granted early. The young nationalist Muslims - men like Dr. Mohammad Alam, Yusuf Meherally, Afzal Haq and Abdulla Brelvi - were like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose in favour of complete independence. The Pan-Islamists - they still styled themselves Khilafatists - were a queer mixture. They had their leaders in the Ali brothers, Hasrat Mohani, Azad Sobhani and Shafi Daudi. They were ardent radicals and communalists at one and the same time. All of them were 'Independence-wallahs' and republicans. The Commonwealth ideal made no appeal to them, for their eyes were fixed upon Greater Islam. They condemned Dominion Status as Hindu Raj, propped up with British bayonets, Some of them were attracted towards socialism and even entertained vague visions of an alliance between Pan-Islamism and Bolshevism.[1]

1. Mohani, for example, was a communist. For poet Iqbal's socialistic sympathies, see W.C.Smith, Modern Islam in India, pp. 112-4. See also M.H.Kidwai, Islam and Socialism, and Pan-Islamism and Bolshevism.

The Simon Commission and the Muslims

The appointment of the Simon Commission in 1927 split the League into two. One section, led by Jinnah, was in favour of boycotting the Commission. The other, led by Shafi,[1] though it regretted the exclusion of Indians from the Commission, considered boycott to be inimical to the interests of the Muslim community and decided to cooperate with the Commission. The so-called Jinnah League met at Calcutta on 30 December 1927 and passed a resolution declaring emphatically that the Commission and its procedure as announced were unacceptable to the people of India and called upon the Muslims to have nothing to do with the Commission at any stage or in any form.[2] Speaking on the resolution, Sir Ali Imam pointed out that the real issue was as to what was the relationship between India and England. Indians had been treated like serfs who would gratefully accept the crumbs falling from the table of British statesmanship. During the war they were called partners and assured of a change in the angle of vision. 'I frankly tell you,' he remarked, 'I fully believed that there was a change in the angle of vision, but I have been disillusioned. We are now told that we are not fit to sit at the same table. Are you going to go down? I, for one, an ex-sun-dried bureaucrat, refuse to take the insult lying down.' Sir Ali explained that the resolution had been purposely worded in a manner to be acceptable to all schools of

1. For Shafi's views see his Some Important Indian Problems, pp. 221-50.
2. The Indian Quarterly Register, 1927, vol.ii, p.443.

thought within the League, i.e., those who denied the right of Parliament to frame a constitution for India; those who stood for a round table conference; and those who, like himself, would have been satisfied with Indian members on the Commission. He added that the minimum that their self-respect and patriotism demanded was to assert their right to participate on equal terms in the framing of the constitution for their country.[1] Mohamed Ali asserted that no nation could concede to another the right to rule over it. 'I admit,' he added, 'that I am unfit to wrest the rule back from English hands, but I do not concede any ethical basis to the British purpose in India. I challenge the Preamble to the Act of 1919. My quarrel is not with the jury. Even if it had consisted of Indians exclusively my objection would have remained.'[2] Jinnah remarked: 'We are denied equal partnership. We will resist the new doctrine to the best of our power. Jallianwalla Bagh was a physical butchery, the Simon Commission is a butchery of our souls.'[3]

The Muslims and the Nehru Report

Even before the appointment of the Simon Commission in November 1927 the League and the Congress had, owing mainly to the efforts of Jinnah, started drawing closer to each other once again. In March 1927 Jinnah had put forward certain conditions on which the Muslims were prepared to give up

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1. Ibid. pp.444-5.
2. Ibid. pp.445-6.
3. Ibid. p.451.

separate electorates.[1] The Congress had welcomed his proposals, but they evoked a storm of indignant protest from Muslims in various parts of the country at what the latter considered to be an unauthorised and extremely undesirable attempt to surrender their Magna Carta. This had made even Jinnah hold back. But the universal resentment caused in India by the appointment of the exclusively British Simon Commission once again gave encouragement to these overtures for Hindu-Muslim unity. The Jinnah League cooperated with the All-Parties Convention in its early stages, but soon differences arose and the League delegates withdrew from the deliberations of the Convention.

When the Nehru Report was published towards the end of 1928, it was supported by a few liberal Muslims, like the Raja of Mahmudabad and Sir Ali Imam, and a few Congress Muslims, like Azad, Ansari and S. Kitchlew. Jinnah and his followers, while they were critical of the Report on so many points, still worked for bringing about a rapprochement between the Congress and the Muslims. The prominent Khilafat leaders and the League under Shafi condemned it bitterly and organised a violent Muslim opposition to it. Their condemnation was

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1. This offer by Jinnah, which came to be known as the 'Delhi Proposals', demanded that Sind should be a separate province, that reforms should be introduced in the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan, that in the Punjab and Bengal representation should be in accordance with population, and that in the central legislature Muslim representation should be no less than one-third. In case these conditions were accepted, the Muslims, it was said, would accept joint electorates with reservation of seats. See Noman, op.cit. pp.244-5.

mainly on two grounds: they wanted separate electorates to be retained; and they insisted that the future constitution of India should be federal and not unitary, with a weak centre for minimum common interests and utmost autonomy for the provinces.

The Khilafat leaders attacked the Nehru Report for an additional reason. They were not prepared to accept the ideal of Dominion Status for India postulated in that Report. They accused the Nehru Report of having admitted in its preamble 'the bondage of servitude' and denounced the 'Dominion-Status-Wallahs' as cowards and slaves. The Khilafat Conference held at Calcutta towards the end of December 1928 passed a resolution declaring that complete independence, outside the British Empire, was the goal of the Indian Muslims.[1] 'The Quoran says,' remarked Mohamed Ali at the Conference, 'that there is no Government but the government of God. Therefore the Mussalmans of India when they make complete independence their goal say only what the Quoran asked them to do 1310 years ago.'[2] Azad Sobhani observed that Dominion Status was another name for bondage and to live like a slave was not proper and consistent with Islam.[3]

Muslim opposition to the Nehru Report on communal lines found organised expression in the All-Parties Muslim Conference held at Delhi on 31 December 1928 and 1 January 1929 under the

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1. The Indian Quarterly Register, 1928, vol.ii, p.403.
2. Ibid. pp.402-3.
3. Ibid.

presidency of the Aga Khan. It was attended by the representatives of almost all sections amongst the Muslims in India. The only notable absentees were Jinnah and his followers and the Congress Muslims. The Conference unanimously adopted a resolution, moved by Muhammad Shafi, which demanded a federal system of government for India, with complete autonomy and residuary powers vested in the constituent states; separate electorates for the Muslims; weightage for the Muslims in the provinces where they were in a minority; non-interference with the Muslim majority in the provinces where they constituded a majority of the population; one-third Muslim representation in the central legislature; due Muslim share in the cabinets and the services; and adequate safeguards for Muslim religion, culture and language. The final clause of the resolution read: 'This Conference emphatically declares that no constitution, by whomsoever proposed or devised, will be acceptable to Indian Mussalmans unless it conforms with the principles embodied in this resolution.'[1] The Conference wisely concentrated on formulating the joint demands of the Muslims in any future political set-up, for here agreement was easy. It did not concern itself with the question of Dominion Status versus independence, for here it was known that there were sections which stood committed differently. The All-Parties Muslim Conference provided the Indian Muslims

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1. The Times of India, 2 January 1929.

with their 'code-book'.[1] In May 1929 Jinnah issued his famous 'Fourteen Points',[2] which laid down more precisely and clearly the basic Muslim demands. But Muslim politics in India remained in a hopelessly chaotic condition in the year 1929 and for quite some time thereafter. Shafi had his own All-India Muslim League. Jinnah continued to be the leader of another organisation with the same nomenclature. The Delhi Conference group was another important element. The Ali brothers headed the Khilafat Conference. The Congress Muslims seceded from the Jinnah League in July 1929 and formed a separate organisation of their own called the All-India Nationalist Muslim Party.

The League and the Commonwealth

What was the attitude of the Muslim League in the 'twenties towards the British connection and the Commonwealth ideal? The question is extremely difficult to answer. The League did not care to define its attitude in any formal or positive manner during this period. Perhaps, it was not possible for it to do so. The League was, in the 'twenties, as we have already noted, an extremely heterogeneous organisation. It contained within its ranks men of every conceivable shade of political thought in the country - communists and socialists, Congressmen and Liberals, rank communalists and high-minded patriots, yes-men and bitter enemies of the British Government in India. It was not easy to formulate

1. The Aga Khan, Memoirs, p.210.
2. Noman, op.cit. pp.284-7.

a definite attitude which could be acceptable to all these diverse elements. Nor would have any such formulation redounded to the advantage of the League. Had the League committed itself to the ideal of complete independence outside the British Empire, it would have alienated the British Government and dangerously weakened its bargaining position. Had it, on the other hand, committed itself to the ideal of Dominion Status within the British Empire, it would have estranged some of its radical and most energetic elements and driven them to the Hindu camp.

During the exciting days of the Khilafat agitation when many Muslims had, to use Shaukat Ali's phrase, 'suspended' their allegiance to the British Crown, the League had in 1920 declared its objective to be 'the attainment of Swaraj by the people of India by all legitimate and peaceful means'. To the question whether Swaraj was to be attained within or without the British Empire, the usual answer was: 'Within, if possible, without, if necessary'. In 1921 an attempt made to get the League committed to complete independence outside the Empire was foiled by the League leadership. Kemal Pasha rendered a great service to the Muslims in India and also to the British Empire by abolishing the Sultanate in 1922 and the Khilafat in 1924. He thereby dealt a coup de grace to the Khilafat agitation in India and spared the Muslims of any tormenting conflict of loyalties in the future. When the League gradually returned to normal politics towards the end of 1923 it was in a chastened and sober mood. It satisfied itself, like the

Swarajists and the Liberals, with demanding 'full responsible government' as early as possible. Muslim attention during the subsequent years was entirely preoccupied with safeguarding their interests in any future constitutional advance. The League did not allow the vexed question of Dominion Status versus independence to intrude into its deliberations. Individuals declared their views as they chose, but the League did not concern itself with that unreal issue. It would, however, be safe to remark that, but for a few extremists - either of the Khilafat or the Congress variety - most of the prominent leaders of the League took the British connection for granted. They recognised in the latter a guarantee not only of Muslim interests but of India's safe and ordered progress towards self-government. To them, as to the Liberals and moderate Congressmen, Swaraj meant full responsible government and Dominion Status for India. The Raja of Mahmudabad spoke for most of his sober and responsible colleagues in the League when he registered an emphatic protest against 'the doctrine of independence in the sense of severance of British connection' in 1928. 'India's place in the British Commonwealth,' remarked the Raja, 'is a place of undeniable security. Her association with the British Commonwealth is a valuable asset and in my judgment it will be a folly to destroy this precious commodity with our own hands. It is my conviction that there is plenty of room for the growth, development and expression of Indian nationalism within the ambit of India's connection with England.'[1]

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1. The Times of India, 27 December 1928.

Jinnah and Irwin Declaration

The moderate and loyal leaders of the League were alarmed at the rapid growth of the idea of complete independence in India in 1928-29. They joined hands with moderate Congressmen and the Liberals in putting pressure on the authorities to make a reassuring move in order to counteract this dangerous doctrine. Jinnah, for example, addressed a lengthy private letter to Premier Ramsay MacDonald on 19 June 1929 in which he warned the latter that the existing deadlock in India, if allowed to continue, would 'prove disastrous both to the interests of India and Great Britain'. Indians, wrote Jinnah, boycotted the Simon Commission because its appointment and procedure relegated them to the position of suppliants and assessors. 'So far as India is concerned, we have done with it and when its report, whatever it may be, is published in due course, every effort will be made in India to damn it.' Jinnah told the Premier that there was no chance of persuading Indians to cooperate in the future stages of constitution-making unless the British Government made a wholly fresh move. 'India has lost her faith,' Jinnah pointed out, 'in the word of Great Britain. The first and foremost thing that I would ask you to consider is how best to restore that faith and revive the confidence of India in the bona fides of Great Britain.' Amongst the reasons for this loss of faith in British pledges and intentions, he emphasised particularly the effect of Sir Malcolm Hailey's remarks in the Legislative Assembly in February 1924, virtually

repudiating that Great Britain was committed to grant India full self-governing Dominion Status. 'There is,' Jinnah added, 'a section in India that has already declared in favour of complete independence, and I may tell you without exaggeration that the movement for independence is gaining ground, as it is supported by the Indian National Congress.....I would most earnestly urge upon you at this moment to persuade His Majesty's Government without delay to make a declaration that Great Britain is unequivocally pledged to the policy of granting to India full responsible Government with Dominion Status. The effect of such a declaration will be very far-reaching and go a great way to create a different atmosphere in the country and will be a severe antidote to the movement for independence.' As regards the practical steps to be taken in order to secure the cooperation of Indian politicians in the future stages of constitution-making, Jinnah suggested that the British Government should, after they had received the proposals of the Simon Commission, but before they formulated their own, 'invite representatives of India, who would be in a position to deliver the goods, (because completely unanimous opinion in India is not possible at present), to sit in conference with them with a view to reaching a solution which might carry, to use the words of the Viceroy, 'the willing assent of political India.'[1]

It was well-meaning counsels, like Jinnah's, which

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1. M.H.Saiyid, op.cit. pp.450-9.

persuaded Lord Irwin and the Labour Government to make the famous announcement of 31 October 1929.

Muslim Demand for Dominion Status

The announcement was welcomed by almost all sections of the Muslim community in India. At the plenary session of the Round Table Conference, which began in London on 12 November 1930, all the Muslim delegates demanded an early grant of Dominion Status, with safeguards for the transitional period, to India. 'I have been,' said Muhammad Shafi at the Conference, 'in the last 40 years of my public life in India, the strongest supporter of the British connection in India - so much so that on occasions I have been called a reactionary by my own countrymen. It is I who say that the situation in India is grave, very grave.'[1] He demanded on behalf of the Mussalmans of India a status for his country of equal partnership in the British Commonwealth. He assured the British Government that a happy and contented India would be a source of immense strength to the British Commonwealth.[2] Even the fiery Mohamed Ali demanded but 'the substance of freedom'. Though he was a republican, he appealed to the King-Emperor to do justice to the people of India. 'British domination is doomed over India,' he said, but asked: 'Is our friendship doomed also?' 'We have a soft corner in our hearts for Great Britain. Let us retain it, I beseech you,' he added. Mohamed Ali

1. Cmd. 3778, p.54.
2. Ibid. pp.54-6.

warned that if they went back to India without the birth of a new Dominion, they would go back to a lost Dominion. 'I would,' he remarked almost prophetically, 'even prefer to die in a foreign country so long as it is a free country, and if you do not give us freedom in India you will have to give me a grave here.'[1]

1. Ibid. pp.97-103. Mohamed Ali never returned to India. He died shortly afterwards (3 January 1931) while still in England. He was buried in Mecca.

PART III

THE BRIDGE BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

CHAPTER VI

INDIA, BRITAIN AND THE COMMONWEALTH, 1917-29

The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms

The Government of India Act Of 1919 afforded evidence not only of Britain's desire to foster representative and responsible parliamentary institutions in India, but also of her intention to transfer power by stages to Indian hands. It was in the nature of a 'control experiment'. A beginning in responsible government was made in the provinces. Provincial government was divided into two compartments. Some subjects, finance and law and order in particular, were reserved to the control of the Governor and his official executive. Other subjects, such as education, agriculture, public health, local government, were transferred to the control of Indian ministers responsible to the elected legislature. Responsible government was to be progressively realised by the transfer of further subjects to ministers as and when it seemed justified in the light of experience. At the end of ten years a Commission was to examine the working of the system and to advise as to whether the time had come for complete responsible government in any province, or whether some subjects now reserved should be transferred, or if matters had gone badly, the reverse.

The devolution of powers from the centre to the provinces was extended and legalised. The provincial legislatures were enlarged. In all of them the majority of the members were to be elected. The franchise was considerably widened.

At the centre no comparable advance was made, but measures were taken to further Indian unity and to pave the way for the introduction of responsible government by the creation of a central legislature consisting of an Assembly and of a Council of State, the majority of whose members were elected. If they could not determine policy they could debate it.

There were two main conditions for the success of the difficult and delicate machinery created by the Act of 1919. The first - it was emphasised by the Government of India [1] - was 'a sufficiently long truce in the struggle for power'. The second - it was emphasised by Ramsay MacDonald [2] - was to persuade India that 'a really substantial beginning' was being made and an organisation created which would by its own momentum lead progressively to complete self-government for India. Unfortunately, neither of these two conditions was satisfied in the event.

Even under the most favourable circumstances, dyarchy would have been 'a high test of human nature' [3] on all sides. In point of fact, the ironical imp who turns the wheel of fortune in human affairs could hardly have devised a setting less favourable to the inauguration of the reforms of 1919. The reflex action of the war, a devastating influenza epidemic, scarcity, high prices, stifled trade, the painful events of 1919, the uneasiness of the Muslims about the future of

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1. Cmd. 123, p.47.
2. 109 H.C.Deb. 5s., col. 1162.
3. Ilbert and Meston, The New Constitution of India, p.138.

Turkey, and finally the non-cooperation movement - all combined to ruin the chances of their success.

Whereas most British officials and politicians believed that the concession of 1919 had been made by Parliament 'in the extreme of its generosity',[1] most Indians thought that it had not given them even 'four annas of genuine Swaraj'.[2] What Montagu had feared came to pass; his scheme proved to be 'much too small for the situation'[3] in India.

There was no more unfortunate remark in the Montagu-Chelmsford Report than that which told Indians 'Hanoz Dihli dur ast'[4] ('Delhi is yet far off'), for their eyes were now set on the citadel of power. The demand of Indian politicians for the fixing of a time-limit arose - and it was so explained [5] - from a disbelief in the intentions of the British Government to transfer power to them. No such time-limit could obviously be fixed; and it is no easy matter to remove distrust and suspicion. But unless Indians had some definite vision of the goal which they were going to reach in some foreseeable future, it is difficult to see how that good will and cooperation between the rulers and the ruled could be secured which was so necessary for the success of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. The tragedy of later years - so full of agonising conflict - was due in the main to the failure of Indian politicians to realise the profound significance of

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1. Viscount Midleton, 37 H.L.Deb. 5s., col.1029.
2. C.R.Das to Ronaldshay, Zetland, 'Essayez', p.135.
3. Montagu, An Indian Diary, p.236.
4. Cd. 9109, p.232.
5. Madhav Rao before the Joint Select Committee, H.C.203, vol.ii, p.124.

the changes wrought in 1919 and how they had put into their hands the ultimate lever of power if only they knew how to use it; and the failure of most British statesmen, on the other hand, to recognise that the Act of 1919 marked the beginning of the end of British rule in India, to visualise the full implications of this process, and be prepared for all its consequences.

Demand for Early Revision of the Act of 1919

Montagu had originally visualised full responsible government in the provinces after six years of the inauguration of his reforms.[1] Yielding to more conservative and cautious advice, he postponed this consummation till the next statutory enquiry.[2] The Montagu-Chelmsford Report, however, recommended a further transfer of subjects to the responsible branch of administration in the provinces at the end of five years.[3] The Government of India had second thoughts and opposed this recommendation.[4] The Joint Select Committee endorsed the view of the Government of India.[5] But hopes were still held out of an earlier revision of the Act of 1919. During the committee stage of the Government of India Bill in the House of Commons in December 1919 Labour members demanded that the proposed Statutory Commission should be appointed after six years instead of ten.[6] They also declared that if

1. Montagu, An Indian Diary, pp. 186-7.
2. Ibid.
3. Cd. 9109, p.211.
4. Cmd. 123, pp.46-7.
5. H.C.203, vol.1., p.12.
6. 122 H.C.Deb. 5s., coll. 497, 778.

a Labour Government came into power it would expedite the appointment of the Commission.[1] Montagu and H.Fisher, on behalf of the Government, assured that there was nothing in the Bill to prevent a revision of the constitution taking place before the expiry of the ten-year period.[2] The working of the Act of 1919 itself revealed that it could not last till 1929. In May 1921, Sir Frederick Whyte, the President of the Indian Legislative Assembly, remarked: 'The political problem presented by the conjunction of an irremovable executive and a large constitutionally irresponsible majority would be ripe for treatment long before ten years are over.'[3] Montagu observed in August 1921: 'There is no use disguising the fact that transitional periods are a very awkward thing, full of anomalies and full of difficulties.....we cannot help recognising these difficulties, finding in them every reason for accentuating the hope for an early termination of the transitional stage and the acquisition by India of full Dominion Status.'[4] Such remarks encouraged Indians to press for an early revision of the Act of 1919. During the course of a debate in the Indian Legislative Assembly in September 1921 members of the Government of India confirmed the impression that the Statutory Commission would be appointed earlier than 1929.[5] Whether or not Reading really meant it, the fact remains that his peace overtures in December 1921, during the

1. Ibid. col. 784.
2. Ibid. coll. 498. 782.
3. The Times of India, 12 May 1921.
4. The Statesman, 16 August 1921.
5. See pp. 212-3 above.

visit of the Prince of Wales, gave his Indian confidants the impression that he was prepared to grant full responsible government to the provinces almost immediately and convene a round table conference of Indian leaders if the non-cooperation movement was withdrawn. Early in 1922 it came to be known in India that Lord Willingdon, the Governor of Madras, was pressing Reading and the Secretary of State that, in view of the success of reforms in his province and in order to excite the healthy rivalry of other provinces, Madras should at once be granted full responsible government. In the light of these facts it is easy to understand the optimism entertained by most Indian politicians regarding an early revision of the Act of 1919. That what Willingdon was eager to grant in 1922 was not actually conceded till 1937 may well represent the measure of Indian disappointment.

'The Surge towards Self-government'

The non-cooperation movement, though it failed in its ostensible purpose, made 'the surge towards self-government' 'a strong and over-mastering creed' in India.[1] Reading noted in April 1922 that, though there was a distinct movement on foot to bring the Congress back into constitutionalism, there would 'still be active agitation for a vast extension of reforms upon more satisfactory lines'.[2] He could, however, do little, even if he wanted, to satisfy this 'active agitation'. The refusal by a substantial part of political India to work the reforms, its apparent determination to take the fortress

1. The Round Table, June 1922, p.634.
2. Reading, Rufus Isaacs, vol.ii, p.249.

of power by storm, the boycott of the Prince's visit, the mounting tide of racial bitterness, the torrent of abuse and accusation hurled at the authorities - all these had stiffened public opinion in England against any further concession in India. The Englishman's sense of fair play felt outraged. Old doubts - which had never been laid at rest - about the capa - city of Indians to work self-governing institutions were re- vived. All the fault was laid at Montagu's door. A feeling grew in official circles in England that they were 'going too fast' and an attempt was made 'to put on the brake'.[1]

It is possible that if the moderate leaders had shown greater vigour and influence with the public in India, they might have been able to secure some extension of reforms in 1924. Their rout at the elections held towards the end of 1923 only strengthened the authorities in their determination to hold fast to the fort and await the forth-coming Swarajist assault. The Swarajists entered the legislatures in 1924 in a triumphant mood, with the declared intention of mending or ending them. They wanted to cooperate with the Government, but on their own terms. While eager for compromise, they often spoke and acted in a manner ill- calculated to achieve their objective. To have opened the door at the first push of the Swarajists would have been highly impolitic from the point of view of the Government. It would have driven the moderates and neutrals to the Swarajist camp and given a dangerous encouragement to the forces which demanded immediate

1. Maurice, The Life of General Lord Rawlinson, p.307.

Swaraj in India. The Government calculated correctly that the alliance of the Swarajists with the other groups in the Assembly was fragile. But they failed to understand the predicament of the Swarajists. The actions of the latter were being jealously watched by their critics outside in the Congress. The Swarajists could only meet the Government half-way. The Government miscalculated when they hoped that the Swarajists would at last settle down to the humdrum task of constitutional opposition in the Assembly.

The Labour Government of 1924.

Analysing the situation in India early in 1924, the Round Table correspondent emphasised how all political parties in the country were unanimous in their desire to secure a modification of the present constitution. He also drew attention to the universal and deep-rooted distrust of politically-minded India in the earnestness of the British Government to carry the country towards responsible government in the near future, and remarked: 'If the exigencies of British politics bring into office in Whitehall a Government which is prepared to consider an inquiry into the Indian constitution, with a view to possible revision within the next two years, it seems very probable that the Swarajists may gradually be weaned from their present idea of acting outside the limits of the existing polity. On the other hand, if no action is taken within the near future of a character which shows that Great Britain is prepared to consider immediate political advance the position of the Liberals will be still further weakened, and

it is the writer's opinion that the difficulty of securing the adhesion of the majority of the politically-minded classes in India to any subsequent change will be correspondingly increased.'[1] This was a remarkably correct appraisal of the political situation in India. But, though the exigencies of British politics brought into office in Whitehall a Labour Government, they did not allow the latter to act on the lines suggested by the correspondent of the Round Table. The attitude of the Labour Government of 1924 towards Indian aspirations was full of sympathy and understanding. They were, however, placed in an extremely awkward position just then - in office but not in power - to fulfil their pledges of earlier years. To have given an indication of yielding to the demands of the Swarajists would have at once exposed them to the charge of embarking upon a policy of 'abdication' [2] in India by the opposition in Parliament, and ruined their chances of success in the forthcoming elections. In office for the first time, their behaviour was being closely scrutinised by their opponents in England. They, therefore, naturally tended to be timid and over-cautious. Lord Olivier, the Secretary of State for India in the Labour Government, nevertheless suggested to Reading privately, with the consent of his colleagues, the appointment of 'a representative Delegation of British politicians of standing - six or seven- to meet a Delegation of similar calibre appointed by the Central Legislature of India to confer .....and see whether they

1. The Round Table, March 1924, pp. 359 - 61.
2. Meston, 56 H.L.Deb. 5s., col. 408.

could not come to an agreement'.[1] Reading 'did not think it opportune',[2] and the proposal was dropped. Pressed by the opposition in Parliament, the Labour Government had to give the assurance that they did not intend to accelerate the appointment of the Statutory Commission or to go beyond the official enquiry into the working of the Act of 1919 proposed by the Government of India. This caused great disappointment to Indian nationalists who had reckoned on something more satisfactory and dramatic.

The Attitude of the Government of India

The Government of India interpreted the demand put forward by the Swarajists in the Assembly in February 1924 as one for the grant of immediate 'full self-governing Dominion Status'.[3] Their spokesmen - Malcolm Hailey, the Home Member, and Basil Blackett, the Finance Member - pointed out that such a demand meant a repudiation of the essential condition of the declaration of 1917, which envisaged progress by stages. They drew attention to the numerous obvious difficulties in the way of India's rapid advance towards the goal of self-government - the problem of the Indian States, of minorities, of developing an Indian army capable of defending the country unaided; the lack of confidence between the various communities in the country; and the danger of political advance outrunning social conditions. Hailey was led during the course of his remarks on the occasion to draw a distinction between

1. 69 H.L.Deb. 5s., col. 249.
2. Ibid.
3. Legislative Assembly Debates, 1924, vol. iv, pt.1, p.357.

responsible government and Dominion Status. The declaration of 1917 and the preamble to the Act of 1919, he said, promised India the former and not the latter. Full Dominion self-government, he argued, was 'of somewhat wider extent' than responsible government, for it meant that not only would the executive be responsible to the legislature, but the legislature would in itself have the full powers which were typical of the modern Dominion, whereas responsible government was not necessarily incompatible with a legislature with limited or restricted powers. 'It may be,' he added, 'that full Dominion self-government is the logical outcome of responsible government, nay, it may be the inevitable and historical development of responsible government, but it is a further and a final step.'[1] Hailey opposed the idea of a round table conference primarily on the ground that it conflicted with Parliament's right of enquiry and decision, and, secondly, because it was not likely to be useful. He pointed out that interests in the country were not yet organised in such a manner as to make the proposed round table conference an authoritative convention, carrying a definite mandate from organised opinion. 'It will inevitably involve this,' he added, 'that at the last stage the Government will be brought in to decide between those conflicting interests, and incur once more all the odium and insinuations involved in the attempt to settle the claims of contesting interests. There may be unity against Government, but that unity breaks down

1. Ibid. p.358.

when any attempt is made to proceed to constructive decisions.'[1]

The attitude of the Government of India was, however, neither non possumus nor hostile. 'We are all Swarajists today,'[2] said Blackett. 'Our aim is the same,' said Hailey, 'our purpose as high as that of any of those who wish the best for India.'[3] Let us not argue this case, he urged, as though we were contestants battling in a court of law for the possession of the future of India. Both Hailey and Blackett emphasised that their differences with the Swarajists were confined only to the method and pace of advance. It was not a problem, they pointed out, of mere words or good feelings, but of administration, for they had a multiutde to move. If the steady and safe course appealed to those in the Government, they explained, it was because they were practical men and experience had taught them to 'mistrust the morasses and dangers of the shorter ways in the valleys below'.[4] Blackett told the impatient nationalists, who continually pressed the driver of the car to go faster, not to forget that 'the driver also is human and he is doing his best and that he cannot be expected to do his best if all the time he is upbraided for his slowness and suspected, and indeed roundly accused to his face of malingering'.[5] 'That is not the way in which to get the best out of any man,'[6] he pointed out. Whatever its shortcomings, he added, Englishmen were proud of their record

1. Ibid. pp. 764-5.
2. Ibid. p.539.
3. Ibid. p.366.
4. Ibid. pp. 366, 539-40.
5. Ibid. p.540.
6. Ibid.

in India, of the manner in which they had discharged their trust. Constant ridicule and vilification of their work in India touched them in a sentimental spot. It was not easy, Blackett said, for Englishmen to give expression to their deeper emotions, but the phrase 'the brightest jewel in the British Crown', uttered during the debate, did arouse deep emotions in their hearts. 'India has become something more than part of the British Empire to countless Englishmen and Englishwomen. It has become an inspiration and an aspiration.'[1] 'From her experiences in India,' Blackett went on, 'England has learned to see a vision of a world order in which the conflicting problems and antagonisms of colour and race and creed could be resolved without armed struggle under a reign of law freely accepted by all. India has become a symbol and the test of that vision: and because of that England has realised that it is not enough to govern a country for the good of the people of that country even with the consent of the governed, and she has set before herself and India the goal of full responsible self-government for the Indian peoples as a full and free partner in the British Commonwealth of Nations. The desire to reach that goal has become for many people in England almost a passion - something more than a desire; it has become the absolute test of the position of the British Empire in the world.'[2]

Blackett and Hailey gave expression not only to the point of view of the Government of India, but of enlightened

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid. p.541.

Englishmen in general - a point of view as reasonable, convincing and appealing as any that a responsible Indian nationalist could put forward. But still the gulf between the two remained unbridged. Why? Motilal suggested the answer when he said of Hailey: 'My only trouble with him is that I cannot get him to feel as I feel.'[1] Blackett provided the answer when he remarked: 'That is the difficulty, the difficulty of mutual understanding, which is at the root of many of our troubles.'[2] For removing this great psychological difficulty an inquisition into the working of dyarchy - such as was proposed by the Government of India - was hardly the appropriate step.

'The Birkenhead Tone'[3]

The Reforms Enquiry Committee - better known as the Muddiman Committee - spent eighteen months over its thankless job. Before, however, it could submit its report the Labour Government had gone out of office and their place was taken by the Conservatives in England.[4] Lord Birkenhead, the new Secretary of State for India, had always regarded the Montagu experiment as 'a mistake, ill-conceived, and potentially extremely mischievous'.[5] 'Alone in the Cabinet', he had 'distrusted, and indeed to some extent opposed, the Montagu-

1. Ibid. p.371.
2. Ibid. p.542.
3. Wedgwood Benn, 231 H.C.Deb. 5s., col. 1329.
4. The change in government, it is suggested, was reflected not only in the recommendations of the majority report of the Committee, but also in the decision to take fresh evidence. F.M.De Mello, The Indian National Congress, p.93.
5. Birkenhead, Birkenhead: The Last Phase, p.261.

Chelmsford Report'.[1] To him it was 'frankly inconceivable that India will ever be fit for Dominion self-government'.[2] He meant 'rigidly to adhere' to the date proposed in the 1919 Act for a revision of the constitution and considered it unlikely that any re-examination would suggest 'the slightest extension'.[3] The nationalist agitation in India 'inclined him rather to contract than to expand any further promises of constitutional advance'.[4] Even as late as September 1928 he wrote to Irwin: 'I should ....., if I was dealing with the situation as a Mussolini might, correct the gravest and most obvious defects; give them nothing more; and resolutely face the chatter and abuse, for you get just as much chatter and abuse whatever you do.'[5] For dealing with the delicate situation in India just then, one wonders if Birkenhead, with his hectoring tone, his lack of real interest [6] in and sympathy for India, was at all the right Secretary of State.

Birkenhead's first important pronouncement on India as Secretary of State in July 1925 was, however, studiously moderate. He demanded from Indian leaders positive evidence of the spirit of cooperation, for as long as Britain was confronted with 'a blank wall of negation', she could not be

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1. Ibid. p.245.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid. p.246.
5. Ibid. p.261.
6. Birkenhead's lack of interest in Indian affairs is testified by: E.Cadogan, The India We Saw, p.4; L.S.Amery. My Political Life, vol.ii, p.298; and by the Indian members of his council. For the last see The Hindustan Review, December 1929, pp.423-9.

expected to make an advance.[1] As for expediting the statutory enquiry, he remarked that 'wise men are not the slaves of dates', but added in warning: 'The door of acceleration is not open to menace: still less will it be stormed by violence.'[2]

The Swarajists did give some proof of their desire to cooperate and accept responsibility, but it was considered inadequate. In September 1925 when they reiterated their demand for the convocation of a representative conference or commission, the Government of India - knowing the mind of the Secretary of State - advised them to lay aside their demand for immediate Swaraj for the moment, settle down, to work the Act of 1919 and respond more fully to the Secretary of State's appeal for cooperation.[3] The demand for greater proof of cooperation stung Jinnah into a bitter diatribe. 'Will you bring,' he asked the Government, 'a section of the politically-minded people, who happen to be the largest political party, will you bring them down on their knees? Will you bring Pandit Motilal Nehru to bow down to the throne at Viceregal Lodge, and say, 'Sir, I am humble, I crawl before you, and will you now be graciously pleased to give a Royal Commission?' Is that what you want? What has Pandit Motilal Nehru been doing in this Assembly? Has he not been cooperating with you? I want to know what more you want, and may I know what evidence, what proof, documentary or oral, do you want me to

1. 61 H.L.Deb. 5s., col. 1077.
2. Ibid.
3. Legislative Assembly Debates, 1925, vol.vi, pt.II, pp. 848-54, 890-6.

produce or adduce that the responsible leaders are willing to cooperate with you? Have you no eyes, have you no ears, have you no brains?'[1]

Birkenhead had decided to appoint the Statutory Commission at the latest by the middle of 1927 'as a matter of elementary prudence' and 'safety', to prevent the choice falling to a Labour Government.[2] He wanted Reading to utilise such an acceleration as 'a useful bargain counter or for further disintegrating the Swarajist Party'.[3] But when in December 1925 Reading suggested an immediate announcement of the appointment of the Commission, Birkenhead disregarded his advice and lost another opportunity of ending the deadlock in India.[4] The tendency to mark time and the anxiety to further disintegrate the Swarajist Party benefitted no one. When Irwin arrived in India in April 1926, the country was already a land of despair. The Commission was appointed in 1927 when nobody in India wanted it.

The Statutory Commission and Parliamentary Sovereignty.

It was the considered judgment of the authors of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report that ever since 1858 the interest shown by Parliament in Indian affairs had not been either 'well-sustained or well-informed', and that it had 'ceased to assert control at the very moment it had acquired it'.[5] And they reached the conclusion that 'Parliament's omission to

1. Ibid. pp. 940 - 1.
2. Birkenhead, Birkenhead: The Last Phase, pp. 250-1.
3. Ibid. p.251.
4. Reading, Rufus Isaacs, vol.ii, p.342.
5. Cd. 9109, p.29.

institute regular means of reviewing the Indian administration' had been 'as much responsible as any single cause for our failure in the face of growing nationalist feeling in India, to think out and to work out a policy of continuous advance.'[1] They sought to remedy this defect by transferring the salaries of the Secretary of State for India and his Office to the Home Estimates, the institution of a Select Committee of Parliament on Indian affairs, and the revival of the old system of periodical inquiry into the Indian administration. In making these recommendations the authors of the Report virtually acceded to the long-standing demands of the Indian nationalists themselves. The periodic Commission which the Report suggested was intended to be 'some outside authority charged with the duty of resurveying the political situation in India and of readjusting the machinery to the new requirements'.[2] It was to be an 'authoritative' Commission which should 'derive its authority from Parliament itself'.[3] The Report also indicated in general terms what the mandate of this proposed Commission should be.[4] Section 41 of the Government of India Act, 1919, accordingly provided for the appointment of a Statutory Commission 'at the expiration of ten years after the passing of this Act' 'for the

1. Ibid. p.30.
2. Ibid. p.212. It was later claimed by some who had enjoyed the confidence of the authors of the Report that the genesis of the idea of a Statutory Commission lay in the anxiety-expressed by Indians and recognised by Montagu and Chelmsford - to obviate the risk of prolonging an admittedly transitory constitution and ensure progressive political advance in India. See Chintamani, The Times of India, 29 December 1927. The Times of India (editorial), 2 January 1928; and Reed, The India I Knew, p.186.
3. Cd. 9109, p.212.
4. Ibid.

purpose of inquiring into the working of the system of government, the growth of education, and the development of representative institutions, in British India', and to 'report as to whether and to what extent it is desirable to establish the principle of responsible government, or to extend, modify, or restrict the degree of responsible government then existing therein'. [1] It was, however, not made clear by the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, or the Act itself, or during the debates in Parliament on the Government of India Bill in 1919, whether this proposed Commission was to be composed exclusively of members of Parliament. Had such a clarification been made when the Act of 1919 was being passed, the Imperial Government would have at least been spared of the charges of bad faith brought against it by even the most moderate-minded Indians when the Simon Commission was appointed in 1927.[2]

All political parties in India in the 'twenties recognised the legislative supremacy of the Imperial Parliament. Even the Congress, which took its stand on the principle of self-determination, bowed to the sovereign and ultimate authority of Parliament. What it challenged was the assertion contained in the Preamble to the Act of 1919 that 'the time

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1. Government of India Act, 1919, 9 & 10. Geo. 5. [ch. 101], p.29.
2. Dawson's comment is significant: 'The British Government are greatly to blame for the manner in which the Simon Commission was launched. Everyone had been allowed to anticipate a 'mixed' Commission'. Wrench, op.cit. p.272. It should also be borne in mind that never during the last 60 years had a Royal Commission been appointed to enquire into Indian affairs which did not include Indians as full members.

and manner of each advance can be determined only by Parliament'.[1] 'That is a proposition,' said Motilal Nehru, 'which we cannot accept, and as long as you insist upon that, so long we shall insist upon the contrary.'[2] Nor did Congressmen stand alone in ridiculing the doctrine of trusteeship and challenging the absolute and exclusive right claimed for Parliament to decide the fate of India. Liberals, Independents and Muslim Leaguers - all alike claimed that Indians should have an equal voice in framing the future constitution for their country, howsoever much they might have differed from Congressmen in the manner of asserting that claim. Dominion precedents were frequently quoted by Indian nationalists in support of their demand to frame their own constitution and submit the same to Parliament for ratification. The recent example of Ireland and the remarks made by Imperial statesmen justifying the procedure followed in her case only strengthened the claim of Indian nationalists. The latter noted and remembered what Lloyd George had remarked during the debate on the Anglo-Irish Treaty on 14 December 1921: 'Here we are going to follow the example which has been set in the framing of every constitution throughout the Empire. The constitution is drafted and decided by the Dominion, the Imperial Parliament taking such steps as may be necessary to legalize these decisions.'[3] Did Sir John Simon ever, during his unhappy experiences in India as Chairman of the Statutory Commission,

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1. 9 & 10. Geo. 5, p.1.
2. Legislative Assembly Debates, 1924, vol.iv, pt.III, p.1954.
3. 149 H.C.Deb. 5s., col.42.

recollect the speech he had delivered in Parliament on 27 November 1922, especially the following passage in it?: 'I believe it would be true to say that constitutions which promote prosperity and loyalty, and which have been found to be lasting constitutions for subordinate states in our Empire, have almost without exception, either actually or virtually, been formed by those who were to live under them themselves.'[1]

It is true that the attacks made by Indian nationalists on the Preamble to the Act of 1919 wounded British amour propre and prompted them to assert more emphatically its principles. This in its turn brought forth counter-assertions of the principle of self-determination. 'The Preamble contains the permanent and static policy of the British Government; Parliament will never divest itself of its trust; it will never agree to merely register your decrees,' said Government spokesmen. 'You are denying us our birthright; you are refusing to treat us as you treated your Dominions; you are exhibiting your physical might,' replied Indian nationalists. And so the debate continued throughout the 'twenties. It was a futile and dangerous game. The Indian problem could not be solved by a fiat of Parliament or 'the simple and soulful exercise of self-determination'. Statesmanship demanded accommodation and reconciliation of apparently divergent principles. As long as Indian nationalists made even a pretence of

1. 159 H.C.Deb. 5s., col. 344. Simon was speaking in the debate on the Constitution of the Irish Free State and supporting the point made by Bonar Law, that 'as a matter of fact, the Constitutions of Canada, Australia and South Africa were all drafted in those Dominions'. (159 H.C.Deb. 5s., col. 329)

recognising Parliament as the final and ultimate authority in Indian affairs, such a reconciliation was not difficult. With all its experience of dealing with Dominion nationalisms, and more especially that of the recent settlement of the Irish question, [1] Parliament would not have found it very difficult to accomodate the far less intransigent claims of Indian nationalism. After all, what Indians demanded was, what Simon had described in 1922 as, 'by no means a novel or a revolutionary procedure'. [2] But for once the statesmen at the helm showed a lamentable lack of ingenuity and imagination. Both Irwin and Birkenhead were fully cognisant of the fact that most Indian parties and politicians disagreed with the claim of Parliament to dispose of the destiny of India as it chose, [3] but relying upon the weaknesses of Indian nationalism they made no serious attempt to accomodate the Indian point of view.

What India needed in 1927 was not a judicial inquest into the 1919 reforms, such as was entrusted to the Simon Commission. The working of dyarchy had proved nothing and settled nothing. It had been a foggy episode in which all parties had been groping. Its results had been so diverse and confused as to make it impossible to base any confident conclusions upon it and extract from its record any sure guidance

1. In the Irish settlement Parliament had made room for the national and self-derived statehood which Ireland claimed.
2. 159 H.C. Deb. 5s., col. 343.
3. Irwin, Speeches, vol. i, p.206; Birkenhead, Birkenhead: The Last Phase, p.252.

for the future. Howsoever intelligent the 'jury' they could not find a solution to the Indian puzzle.[1] Even as 'rapporteurs' they were hardly likely to tell much that had not already been heard. The great need of the hour in India was to restore confidence in the good intentions of the Imperial Government. This could only be done by a sympathetic understanding of the Indian problem and by determining the political advance of the country in cooperation with its leaders. The most perfect and impartial findings of an excellent commission could be of little use if they were not acceptable to the main body of Indian nationalists. The difficulties in the way of composing a mixed Commission were obvious and many, but certainly there were other ways of approaching the problem, and the considerations which prompted the Government of India and the Secretary of State not to search for these alternative methods do not reflect much credit on either.[2] There was not one concession that was made later - either by way of liberalising the procedure of the Commission

1. Simon admitted as much: 'I sometimes feel as though I had been asked to spend two years over a gigantic crossword puzzle, with the tip whispered into my private ear that the puzzle had no solution'. Simon to Dawson, 12 January 1929, The History of The Times, vol. iv, pt.II, p.869.
2. One of the most prominent considerations which weighed with Birkenhead in excluding Indians from the Commission was the fear that an 'alliance might be created between the Indian and the British Labour representatives'; Irwin was 'advised' that 'the Muslims certainly would not boycott, and if the Muslims did not boycott, the Hindus would hardly dare to do, so sharp was communal tension, and so keen would be the anxiety lest the decision might go against those who did not appear before the Commssion to make their case'. Halifax, Fulness of Days, pp. 115-6.

or of supplementing its labours - that could not have been made earlier with more grace and better results. The appointment of an exclusively British Statutory Commission in 1927 very nearly caused the disruption of another Empire on the rock of juridical sovereignty and will always remain a lesson in how not to do things. All tribute to Irwin who retrieved the situation in time. Yet another example of what Toynbee calls 'the British habit of 'being only just in time'[1]'!

India and Dominion Status

In 1917 the phrase 'Dominion Status' had not yet come into use. The historic announcement of 20 August of that year only spoke of the goal of British policy as 'the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire'.[2] This was, however, universally interpreted as identifying the goal prescribed for India 'with that already attained by the self-governing Dominions'.[3] The Montagu-Chelmsford Report underlined this interpretation when it visualised 'a completely representative and responsible Government of India on an equal footing with the other self-governing units of the

1. A.J.Toynbee, The Conduct of British Empire Foreign Relations since the Peace Settlement, p.29.
2. 97 H.C.Deb. 5s., col. 1295.
3. Curtis, Dyarchy, p.362. India was to attain 'the same sort of status and position which the self-governing Dominions at present enjoy'. E.Barker, The Future Government of India and the Civil Service, p.5.

British Commonwealth'.[1] Men like Curzon,[2] Milner [3] and Chirol[4] had now obviously reconciled themselves to the idea of a 'brown Dominion' within the Empire. Even those who, like Lord Sydenham,[5] disagreed with the measure and manner of political advance in India did not quarrel with the ultimate goal envisaged for her. The only discordant voice in this chorus of approval was that of Lord Lansdowne, who dismissed the idea of India eventually finding 'her place alongside the self-governing British Dominions' as 'a dream,'[6] and for this he was duly reprimanded by The Times next day.[7] During the debates in Parliament on the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, speaker after speaker - irrespective of party affiliation - expressed the hope that India would in the fulness of time become a self-governing portion of the Empire like the Dominions. The ideal was variously expressed as 'self-government within the Empire',[8] 'partnership in the Empire',[9] 'equality with the other great portions of His Majesty's Dominions',[10] 'a sister nation in the British Empire',[11] 'one of the self-governing Dominions of the British Empire',[12] and even as 'Dominion Status'.[13]

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1. Cd. 9109, p.277. Also pp. 120, 149.
2. 37 H.L.Deb.5s., col. 1049.
3. Wrench, op.cit. p.358; 41 H.L.Deb.5s., col. 312.
4. The Times, 6 November 1917, 6 June, 27 June 1918.
5. 31 H.L.Deb. 5s., col.548.
6. Ibid. col.787.
7. The Times, 25 October 1918.
8. 109 H.C.Deb. 5s., col.1158.
9. Ibid. col. 1208.
10. Ibid.
11. 116 H.C.Deb. 5s., col. 622.
12. Ibid. col. 2342.
13. 109 H.C.Deb. 5s., col. 1225.

In the debate on Irwin's announcement in 1929 Lord Reading remarked that the term 'Dominion Status' had 'never been used hitherto in any formal document'.[1] This was not true. The term occurs in the Crewe Committee Report of 1919 as an indication of the goal which India was to attain in course of time.[2] It occurs repeatedly in the Esher Committee Report of 1919-20.[3] In fact, the Esher Committee had been instructed by the Secretary of State for India to avoid framing their proposals in a manner likely to prove inconsistent with 'the gradual approach of India towards a Dominion Status'.[4]

The Instrument of Instructions issued to the Governors-General after the passing of the Act of 1919 read: 'For above all it is Our will and pleasure that the plans laid by Our Parliament for the progressive realisation of responsible government in British India as an integral part of Our Empire may come to fruition, to the end that British India may attain its due place among our Dominions.'[5] The message of the King-Emperor read out by the Duke of Connaught before the Indian Legislature in February 1921 said: 'For years, it may be for generations, patriotic and loyal Indians have dreamed of Swaraj for their motherland. To-day you have beginnings of Swaraj within my Empire, and widest scope and ample opportunity for progress to the liberty which my other Dominions enjoy.'[6]

1. 75 H.L.Deb. 5s., col. 377.
2. Cmd. 207, pp. 11, 40.
3. Cmd. 943, pp. 4, 7, 8, 32, 103.
4. Ibid. p.4.
5. Halifax, Fulness of Days, p.121.
6. Legislative Assembly Debates, 1921, vol.i, pt.I, p.14.

If these declarations meant anything, it was clear that the British Government was committed by the announcement of 1917 and the Act of 1919 to carry India towards Dominion Status in the fulness of time. Lloyd George, who was the Prime Minister when the announcement was made and the Act passed, testified that it was then 'decided' and 'promised' 'that gradually, if the experiment were successful,.....we would extend it until India ultimately enjoyed full partnership in the Empire on equal terms with our great Dominions'.[1]

Montagu often expressed his hope that India would attain full Dominion Status as early as possible.[2] Reading, who was critical of Irwin's Dominion Status declaration of 1929, had himself held out the same attractive ideal for India in his speeches as Viceroy,[3] even employing the phrase 'Dominion Status'.[4] There was, in fact, not one important English statesman who had not, at one time or another during the years 1917-29, indicated either literally or figuratively that Dominion Status was the glorious destiny in store for India. The Times, on 5 November 1929, quoted only ten such pronouncements made by responsible statesmen of all parties

1. 231 H.C.Deb. 5s., col. 1316.
2. See p. 286 above.
3. Reading, Speeches, vol.II, pp. 71, 125-6, 213, 283.
4. Ibid. p.423. Nor would it appear that Reading, in 1921, thought that Dominion Status was a very remote ideal. He wrote to Montagu on 18 August 1921: 'I am in entire agreement with you. I think it useless to make pronouncement of our policy to give India in the near future full Dominion Status and yet at the same time to hesitate to put her in the position to manage her affairs when they have been entrusted to her'. Reading, Rufus Isaacs, vol.ii, pp.209, 333-4.

in England.[1] One could easily quote a hundred. Lord Passfield was justified when he challenged the Lords in 1929: 'Is there any noble Lord who will get up and say that the goal of India in the fulness of time has not been declared to be Dominion Status - declared over and over again?'[2]

The only objection that could be taken to Irwin's declaration of 1929 - apart from its timing - was that the content and meaning of Dominion Status had widened and become more definite in recent years and that this enlarged and definitive Dominion Status could no longer be held out as the ultimate goal for India. But having repeatedly promised India Dominion Status, it was impossible to raise such an objection. The development and definition of Dominion Status could not be turned into an argument for 'lowering the sights' in the case of India. 'Can there be any doubt whatever, in any quarter of the House,' inquired Baldwin, 'that the position of an India, with full responsible Government in the Empire, when attained, ... must be one of equality with the other states in the Empire?' And he added: 'Nobody knows what Dominion Status will be when India has responsible Government, ... but surely no one dreams of a self-governing India with an inferior status.'[3] The honest and straightforward Irwin had no doubt that His Majesty's Government stood committed by solemn declarations to the policy of leading India on to

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1. The Times, 5 November 1929.
2. 75 H.L.Deb. 5s., col.422.
3. 231 H.C.Deb. 5s., col. 1312.

Dominion Status.[1] He realised the need to remove the suspicions and misunderstandings created by Hailey's speech in the Indian Legislative Assembly in February 1924. Moreover, as he wrote later, 'whatever might be the exact definition of Dominion Status worked out by ingenious disciples of the law, it in no way touched my conviction that you could not, without losing India from the Commonwealth, hold out a future for her less honourable than that to which constitutional development had brought Canada or Australia.'[2]

The Development of Dominion Status[3]

When the war broke out in 1914, the Dominions enjoyed virtually complete self-government in all internal affairs. They amended, directly or indirectly, their constitutions. Their parliaments legislated within their borders without interference from London. They regulated their tariffs and immigration; and controlled their military and naval forces. A few theoretical limitations on their powers still existed, such as the legal supremacy of the Imperial Parliament, but these were of little consequence, for the Imperial Government scrupulously refrained from interfering in matters which concerned the Dominions alone. The Dominions had also succeeded by 1914 in acquiring almost complete control in practice over

1. 'I said nothing that had not been said, or directly implied, by speakers of every British party for several years past.' Irwin, Speeches, vol. ii, p. 356.
2. Halifax, Fulness of Days, p.122.
3. Only a very brief and, consequently, over-simplified account is being attempted here.

their own commercial treaties and were steadily increasing their influence in regard to political treaties in which they had a real and special interest. They also participated in several minor international conferences of a technical nature. But in more vital matters, such as the conduct of foreign policy, the diplomatic relations with other countries, the declaration of war and the making of peace, the participation in important international conferences, they took virtually no part. Here the mother country still exercised a trusteeship on their behalf.

The war enormously accelerated the historic movement towards greater Dominion autonomy and its broadening out so as to include control over foreign affairs as well. While the war demonstrated strikingly the solidarity of the Empire, it also revealed the weakness of the machinery of Imperial cooperation. This made many recognise the necessity and cherish lively hopes of an Imperial federation. The federationists or centralists underestimated the force of Dominion nationalism and overrated that of the Imperial sentiment. They imagined that a promising start had been made towards their cherished goal of a closer union of the Empire in the shape of the Imperial War Cabinet and Conferences of 1917-18. But though the war had undoubtedly heightened the affection and reverence of the Dominions for the mother country, it had an even more marked effect in intensifying national consciousness within the Dominions. Moreover, the sudden but instruc - tive initiation in the realities of high policy which the

war had enabled them strengthened the conviction of at least some Dominion statesmen not to leave the issues of foreign policy in the hands of the British Government alone. The result was the famous resolution IX of the Imperial War Conference of 1917, which proposed the calling of a special Imperial Conference after the war to deal with 'the readjustment of the constitutional relations of the component parts of the Empire', and laid down that 'any such readjustment, while thoroughly preserving all existing powers of self-government and complete control of domestic affairs, should be based upon a full recognition of the Dominions as autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth, and of India as an important portion of the same, should recognize the right of the Dominions and India to an adequate voice in foreign policy and in foreign relations, and should provide effective arrangements for continuous consultation in all important matters of common Imperial concern, and for such necessary concerted action, found on consultation, as the several Governments may determine'.[1]

Both centralists and autonomists drew equal comfort from the ambiguous phraseology of the above resolution, but, as later events were to confirm, it represented in fact a triumph for the autonomists. It negatived the idea of formal federation; and it repudiated the continued subordination of the Dominions in external affairs.

At the end of the war the Dominions went a step further.

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1. Cd. 8566, p.5.

They demanded - Canada taking the lead in the matter - and were granted separate representation at the Peace Conference. Though the facade of the diplomatic unity of the Empire was carefully maintained, the subsequent procedure in signing and ratifying the various Peace Treaties and the admission of the Dominions to the League of Nations were additional signs that a new movement towards decentralisation had begun. The Dominions were now individual nations. They were the equals of Great Britain. They had achieved new weight and honour in the councils of the Empire and the world.

The years 1920-22 are called 'the period of cooperation'[1] and 'tentative centralisation'[2] in Imperial affairs. An attempt was made during this period to keep alive the dying illumination of the war-years by the revival of a centralised executive in the guise of the 'Imperial Peace Cabinet' and the formulation of a common foreign policy for the Empire. For various reasons the proposal for a constitutional conference was allowed to lapse. But the victory of the centralists at the Imperial Conference of 1921 was short-lived, for very soon the tide of Dominion equality and autonomy swelled again, aided by the accidents of time and circumstance.

The Definition of Dominion Status

At the Imperial War Conference of 1917 General Smuts had complained that too many of the old ideas still clung to

1. A.G.Dewey, The Dominions and Diplomacy, vol.ii, p.62.
2. R.M.G.Dawson, The Development of Dominion Status, p.4.

the new organism of the Empire, and that although in practice there was great freedom, yet in actual theory the status of the Dominions was of a subject character.[1] And he had expressed the hope that one of the most important tasks of the proposed constitutional conference to be held after the war would be to bring the theory of the Commonwealth into conformity with its practice. He reiterated his demand for a definition of Dominion Status at the Imperial Conference of 1921 and drew the attention of his colleagues to the fact that theoretical issues were practical politics in South Africa. In a private memorandum entitled 'The Constitution of the British Commonwealth', he emphasised the need to forestall the demands of nationalism in the Dominions and warned that 'unless Dominion Status was quickly solved in a way that would satisfy the aspirations of these young nations, separatist movements were to be expected in the Commonwealth'.[2] But the majority of the Conference remained passive, agreeing rather with W.M.Hughes, the Prime Minister of Australia, that the inequalities of strict law were 'figments, a few ancient forms' and that there was no need 'to set down in black and white the relations between Britain and the Dominions'.[3] It was accordingly decided that no advantage was to be gained by holding the constitutional conference envisaged in 1917.[4]

1. Cd. 8566, p.47.
2. Quoted in C.M.van den Heever, General J.B.M.Hertzog, p.212.
3. Cmd. 1474, p.22.
4. Ibid. p.10.

Even when, towards the end of 1921, the Irish Free State was granted 'the same constitutional status in the Community of Nations known as the British Empire as the Dominion of Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, the Dominion of New Zealand, and the Union of South Africa',[1] a definition of Dominion Status was studiously avoided. 'What does 'Dominion Status' mean?' asked Lloyd George speaking in the debate on the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, but he refrained from answering it, preferring instead to speak of the dangers of definition. He recalled the anxiety of all the Dominion delegates at the Imperial Conference held earlier in the year to avoid 'any rigid definition'. 'That is not the way,' he added, 'of the British Constitution. We realize the danger of limiting our Constitution by too many formalities.'[2] But a definition of Dominion Status could not long be avoided. 'Some definition,' says Professor Mansergh, 'of the Commonwealth system there had to be. It was directly demanded..... by self-consciously nationalist Dominions, and in a fundamental sense it was made necessary by the inquiring, destructive temper of the age.'[3]

Before the time for 'Imperial stock-taking' came in 1926, several incidents, during the years 1922-25, had contributed towards an extension of the concept of Dominion Status.

1. Articles of Agreement for a Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland, 6 December 1921; A.B.Keith, Speeches and Documents on the British Dominions, 1918-1931, p.77.
2. 149 H.C.Deb. 5s., coll. 27-8.
3. N. Mansergh, Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of External Policy, p.5.

The first was the famous Chanak incident in September 1922, when the British Government asked the Dominions to stand by it in a threatened war with Turkey. The reactions of the Dominions to this call from the mother country were varied, but the attitude of Canada left the Imperial Government in no doubt that that Dominion was not prepared to underwrite automatically all the wars of Great Britain. This suggested, by implication, that although Great Britain might be involved in war, a Dominion might not take part in actual hostilities, thereby drawing the distinction between, what came to be called, a state of 'active belligerency' and one of 'passive belligerency'.[1] The second incident was the conclusion of the Halibut Fisheries Treaty in 1923 between Canada and the United States, which carried the treaty-making powers of the Dominions a step further, for Canada had successfully asserted its right to negotiate and sign a separate treaty with a foreign country without the participation or even nominal control of Great Britain. The third incident was the refusal by Canada in 1924 to ratify the Treaty of Lausanne on the pretext that she had not been represented at the Lausanne Conference and had taken no part in the negotiations leading up to the settlement. Canada thus declined to undertake responsibility for a British-made treaty and made clear that the self-governing units of the Empire were primarily concerned with their own foreign policies. 'Lausanne was,'

1. Toynbee, op.cit. pp. 2-3, 46-52.

says Dawson, 'in a sense, complementary to Chanak. Chanak had drawn a distinction between a state of 'active belligerency' and one of 'passive belligerency', a state where one part of the Empire might be engaged in hostilities while another part abstained. Lausanne enunciated a companion doctrine of 'active responsibility' and 'passive responsibility'. One part of the Empire might henceforth undertake certain active obligations, while another part, though acquiescing in the policy of the former, would recognise in the commitment no pledge for it to participate in enforcing the terms of the undertaking.'[1] The fourth event was the appointment by the Irish Free State of her separate Minister Plenipotentiary to Washington in 1924 [2] - an act which, despite formal contemporaneous assertions to the contrary by the Imperial Government, marked a definite breach in the diplomatic unity of the Empire. The fifth incident was also occasioned by the Irish Free State when in 1924 she registered, despite British objections, the Anglo-Irish Articles of Agreement of 1921 with the League of Nations, thereby disregarding the inter se doctrine of the British Commonwealth, i.e. that the relations between the various parts of the Empire were in essentials

1. Dawson, op.cit. p.79.
2. Ireland had in fact taken advantage of the right granted to Canada in 1920, as a special case, to send a diplomatic representative to the United States, but not exercised by the latter Dominion until February 1927. The Irish representation also went beyond the reservations comtemplated in 1920. See Ibid. pp.36, 9607, 202, 314-5.

not international owing to their partnership under the Crown. The sixth incident was the specific exemption of the Dominions and India from the obligations entered into by Great Britain in Europe through the Treaty of Locarno in 1925. The limitation of Dominion liability in the Locarno settlement not only led to a general acceptance by the Empire of the conception of passive responsibility, it also marked the final breakdown of the policy to secure a united foreign policy for the Empire. 'A tremendous blow had been struck,' says Dewey, 'at the theory of the diplomatic unity of the Empire.'[1]

The task of readjustment and redefinition of intra-Commonwealth relations which had been envisaged in 1917 but later shelved was at last taken in hand in 1926 under the combined pressure of Canada, the Irish Free State and South Africa.[2] The Inter-Imperial Relations Committee of the Imperial Conference of 1926, known from its chairman's name as the Balfour Committee, attempted to define Dominion Status in non-legal terms. Its report described the Dominions as 'autonomous Communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as

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1. Dewey, op.cit. vol.ii, p.252.
2. For the view that the role of South Africa was decisive see Mansergh, op.cit. pp.10-11.

members of the British Commonwealth of Nations'.[1] This general definition was open to, and was in fact subjected to, varying interpretations by constitutional lawyers and politicians, but it did lay down three indisputable essentials of Dominion Status. They were: allegiance to the King in common with Great Britain; equality of status to Great Britain; and free association with Great Britain. The Balfour Committee Report did not change the actual position of the Dominions; it only attempted an agreed general interpretation of existing facts. There still remained various rules of strict law and particular conventional rules regulating certain aspects of the relations of Great Britain and the Dominions which were inconsistent with the general declaration of equal status made in 1926. The Balfour Committee had looked into the 'existing administrative, legislative, and judicial forms' and found that they were 'admittedly not wholly in accord with the position as described in .....this Report'.[2] Upon some of these inequalities of status - those relating to the Title of His Majesty the King, the status of the Governor-General, the appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, and the conduct of foreign relations - the Committee

1. Cmd. 2768, p.14. 'The Declaration does not define 'Dominion Status'. It defines the status of a Member of the British Commonwealth of Nations, and it declares that this status is enjoyed by Great Britain and the Dominions. But it is possible from a study of the Declaration to discover what sort of status is conferred upon the Dominions.' K.C.Wheare, The Statute of Westminster and Dominion Status, p.29.
2. Cmd. 2768, p.15.

had arrived at agreed conclusions and made recommendations. Others - such as those relating to the reservation and disallowance of Dominion legislation, the Dominions' lack of power to legislate with extra-territorial effect, and the principles of Colonial Laws Validity Act, 1865 - it suggested to be referred to a special conference of experts. This special conference - known as the Conference on the Operation of Dominion Legislation and Merchant Shipping Legislation - met in London from 8 October to 4 December 1929 and recommended removal, so far as was thought necessary, of certain of these inequalities. Its recommendations were adopted in substance by the Imperial Conference of 1930, and in 1931 the Statute of Westminster was passed to give legal endorsement to some of them.

What did Dominion Status signify after 1926? It certainly meant - as it had come to mean even earlier - virtually complete self-government in the internal affairs of a Dominion. But Dominion Status in principle had, as Professor Coupland pointed out, 'nothing to do with the form or type of internal constitution in a Dominion'. It was, he wrote, 'only concerned with the external position' - 'a matter, so to speak, of the 'international' relations between the nations of the Commonwealth'.[1] Much confusion was caused because most people - both in India and England - failed to take into account this distinction. Dominion Status signified what the 1926 declaration had laid down: common allegiance to the

1. Coupland, The Empire in These Days, pp. 275-6.

Crown, equality of status and free association. It included the right of a Dominion to conclude a treaty with a foreign power on any subject - technical or political - on its own initiative and through its own plenipotentiaries; the right of legation; the right of being represented in international conferences of every kind by its own separate delegations; the right to be bound by no international obligation to which it had not itself specifically agreed; and the right to conduct its own foreign relations subject to the conventional duty of consultation with other members of the Commonwealth.[1] Did the declaration of 1926 give the Dominions the right to secede from the Empire? General Hertzog maintained that it did. Others denied this. There was no authoritative pronouncement upon the point.

India and the Balfour Declaration

How did Indian nationalists react to this process of development and definition of Dominion Status? The Balfour Report put heart into the apologists for Dominion Status in India. 'Dominion Status has come to mean something indistinguishable from independence, except for the limk with the Crown,'[2] they assured the young radicals within their ranks on the authority of that Report. And they quoted Hertzog's remarks to prove that 'the Empire's teeth had been

1. P.J.N.Baker, The Present Juridical Status of the British Dominions in International Law, pp. 204-5.
2. All-Parties Conference, 1928: Report of Committee, p.21.

drawn'. 'Between Britain and the Dominions there is a partnership at will on terms of equality and mutual benefit,' Gandhi told the 'Independence-wallahs' and he emphasised that Dominion Status implied 'a capacity to declare independence'.[1] But the thought that the Dominions had raced far ahead of them could not but make Indians impatient with their slow progress and feel more acutely their subodinate status. The passion for equality in the eyes of the world was the dominating force in India and the feeling of being left behind offended their pride. They wanted status. Those who still put their trust in evolving within the Empire wanted Dominion Status immediately. It did not matter, they said, what safeguards and reservations were imposed on that status. The more sensitive and sceptical spirits were impelled to seek the same equality of status even outside the Empire.

Second Thoughts about India?

Lloyd George's misgivings in 1921 about defining Dominion Status did not prove altogether unfounded. After 1926 a certain element of rigidity seems to have entered into the concept of Dominion Status. Birkenhead wrote to Irwin in May 1928: 'You will remember that in dealing with the Indianisation of the Indian Army[2] His Majesty's Government were averse from using the phrase 'Dominion Status' to describe even the ultimate and remote goal of Indian political development, because it has been laid down that Dominion Status means

1. 'Independence', Young India, 13 January 1927.
2. This refers to the Report of the Indian Sandhurst Committee, 1927.

'the right to decide their own destinies', and this right we were not prepared to accord to India at present, or in any way to prejudge the question whether it should ever be accorded.'[1] This would clearly indicate that after 1926 Dominion Status came to acquire - at least in the minds of certain British statesmen - a definite meaning, quite different from that of earlier years, and prompted second thoughts about the advisability of indicating the goal of India's advance by the use of that phrase. Earl Winterton, a former Under-Secretary of State for India, made the following entry in his diary on 25 October 1929 after a luncheon with Peel and Birkenhead: '.... a somewhat serious situation has arisen. Edward Irwin is anxious to make a declaration defining 'Dominion Status' as the final goal. Now 'Dominion Status' has a very special meaning (especially since the Imperial Conference of 1926), and use of the term would be in advance of any of the definitions hitherto attempted such as 'self-government within the Empire' because of that meaning.'[2] During the debate in the Lords on Irwin's announcement of 31 October 1929, Birkenhead asked: 'What does Dominion Status mean? .... Does Dominion Status mean the same thing that it meant a month before the last Imperial Conference? Most certainly not.'[3] Would not these remarks of Birkenhead and Winterton themselves suggest that when they and their friends attacked Irwin and the Labour Government for having used a

1. Birkenhead, Birkenhead: The Last Phase, pp. 258-9.
2. Earl Winterton, Orders of the Day, pp. 158-9.
3. 75 H.L.Deb. 5s., col. 404.

'vague' and 'indeterminate' phrase their real objection to the announcement was on the ground that it had 'loosely and ignorantly employed'[1] a phrase which was no longer so vague and indeterminate. The storm that burst in England over Irwin's announcement proved that the Indian desire for a definite affirmation and indefeasible assurance of Dominion Status as India's goal was no childish sentiment. It was certainly not Irwin's declaration which deserved to be called 'foolish and deceiving'.[2]

India's 'Dominion Status in Action'

Numerous considerations led to India's representation at the Imperial War Conference in 1917 . Her substantial contribution to the war effort merited recognition. There was need to placate Indian public opinion which had demanded such representation. India's political, military and financial importance within the Empire necessitated her inclusion in any Imperial organisation worth the name. It was also hoped that her direct representation at the Imperial Conference might facilitate a solution of the vexed question of Indian settlers in the Dominions. Fiscal matters were expected to loom large in Imperial deliberations and both the Government of India and Indian public opinion were insistent that their interests in this regard could best be voiced by their own representatives.

The Special War Conference of 1917 was expressly so

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1. Ibid.
2. '.... this foolish and deceiving declaration'. Birkenhead, 'The Peril to India' - 1, Last Essays, p.35.

called in order to accommodate India, for the constitution of the regular Imperial Conference did not permit of India's inclusion.[1] The Dominion delegates saw the Indian representatives and seemed to like them. They vied with one another in their friendly and flattering tributes to India. The Canadian Prime Minister moved, and the New Zealand Prime Minister seconded, that the necessary steps should be taken to modify the resolution of 1907 fixing the constitution of the Imperial Conference, so that in future India might attend it as of right.[2] Its unanimous acceptance marked 'an immense advance in the position of India in the Empire' and admitted 'the Government of India to full partnership in the Councils of the Empire' with the self-governing Dominions.[3] India also found a mention in the famous constitutional resolution of this Conference which referred to the Dominions as 'autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth' and to India as 'an important portion of the same', and claimed the right of the Dominions and India to an adequate voice in foreign policy and foreign relations.[4] 'The admission of India to the Conference,' says Professor Hancock, 'which should normally have been the sequel to Indian self-government, was a recognition of the fact that self-government was India's destiny. It was, so to speak, a payment in advance which India had earned by her extraordinary services.'[5] This was explicitly affirmed

1. Lloyd George, War Memoirs, vol. iv, pp. 1737 - 38; Cd. 8566, p. 15.
2. Cd. 8566, p.22.
3. Austen Chamberlain, 93 H.C. Deb.5s., col. 2256.
4. Cd. 8566, pp. 5, 49-50.
5. Hancock, Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs, vol.i, p. 169.

four months later by the announcement of 20 August 1917. 'India, it is clear, was in 1917 recognised as potentially a Dominion.'[1]

When at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 special representation was given to the four chief Dominions in the British Empire delegation, the same treatment was accorded to India. Thus it came about that plenipotentiaries holding full powers in respect of India took part in the discussions at Paris and signed the Treaty of Versailles and the other Peace Treaties. India was treated formally in all respects on the same footing as the Dominions and like them she became a separate Member of the League of Nations. 'By securing admission of India to the League,' says Professor A.B. Keith, 'the British Government virtually, though not technically, bound itself to the task of creating a self-governing India which would be entitled on the same basis as the Dominions to vote freely on the business of the League.'[2] In fact, pleading for the inclusion of India in the League, Lord Robert Cecil had remarked before the Commission drafting the Covenant: 'The British Government is trying just as rapidly as possible to advance India into a self-governing colony.'[3] Referring to India's separate representation at the Peace Conference and the League of Nations, Montagu observed in 1919: 'I can

1. Keith, A Constitutional History of India, p.467.
2. Ibid. p.468. See also Keith, Letters on Imperial Relations, pp. 201, 213, 348; Letters and Essays on Current Imperial and International Problems, pp.7, 124; and Cecil Hurst, Great Britain and the Dominions, p.7.
3. D.H.Miller, The Drafting of the Covenant, vol.i, p.164.

only repeat that these things.....commit this House and Parliament to the view that this position is only justified if you can raise India to the position of a sister nation in the British Empire, and it is wholly inconsistent with the position of subordination.'[1]

The appointment in 1920 of a High Commissioner for India in London was another indication of India's coming Dominionhood. To him were transferred the agency functions, mainly economic, which had so far been performed by the India Office. India House presently took its place in London beside the national headquarters of the other Dominions. The first High Commissioner for India was an English Jew and an ex-member of the I.C.S., Sir William Meyer, but a better guardian of India's economic interests could hardly be found.[2] On Meyer's death an Indian, D.M.Dalal, was appointed to the office in 1923.

India's membership of the League, as the only non-self-governing country, was 'an anomaly among anomalies'.[3] Constitutionally India could not have a separate foreign policy, for her Government was a subordinate branch of His Majesty's Government in England. Indian delegates to the League were nominated by the Secretary of State in consultation with the Government of India and their briefs were prepared in London. Indian nationalists complained that their country's delegates

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1. 116 H.C.Deb.5s., coll. 622, 2301.
2. For the tribute of an Indian nationalist see St.Nihal Singh, 'India's First High Commissioner in London', The Modern Review, December 1922, pp. 751-8.
3. Miller, op.cit. vol.i, p.493.

to the League were not really representative [1] and that her membership of the League was a costly farce. What was the substance of India's separate membership? The question is extremely controversial and not easy to answer in the present stage of our knowledge. It was claimed by the India Office in 1929 that it had been 'the deliberate object of the Secretary of State to make India's new status a reality for practical purposes within the widest possible limits'.[2] Indian delegates to the League sessions also testified to 'the reality of India's independence as a member of the League'.[3] It is not our purpose here to examine the truth of these assertions. But that India derived numerous advantages even from the quasi-independent character of her representation at the League is undeniable. India as a whole (both British India and the Indian States) was represented at the League. This not only meant a tacit recognition in international law and practice of the unity of India, it had also a marked effect on India's national position and on the growth of a

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1. The historian of the League makes the same complaint: 'The voice of India came, then and for too many years thereafter, not from the vast spaces of the sub-continent but from a dusty corridor in Whitehall.' F.F.Walters, A History of the League of Nations, vol.i, p.117. How easily is it forgotten that but for the occupants of that 'dusty corridor in Whitehall ' the voice of India would not have been heard at all!
2. 'International Status of India', Memorandum presented to the Indian Statutory Commission by the India Office, Report of the Indian Statutory Commission, vol.v, p.1632.
3. Report of the Indian Delegation to the session of the League Assembly, 1929, quoted by C.A.W.Manning, 'India and the League of Nations', India Analysed, vol.i, p.34. See also Srinivasa Sastri, Speeches and Writings, pp. 401-25 and J.C.Coyajee, India and the League of Nations, pp.23-6.

sense of unity among her as yet somewhat loosely integrated populations. Membership of the League gave India prestige, collective self-esteem and moral influence. It stimulated her national self-consciousness and her interest in international affairs. It enabled her to know the world and to be known in turn. It gave a good many Indians the opportunity of familiarising themselves with wider international problems and co-operating in their solution, and of establishing personal contacts with representatives of other countries. The knowledge and experience thus gained stood India in good stead when she became independent. Nor were her delegates to the League so unrepresentative. Few patriotic Indians would today regret the things said or done in India's name by such men as Srinivasa Sastri, Ramaswamy Aiyer, G.S.Bajpai, Atul Chatterjee and Muhammad Habibullah - to mention only a few outstanding examples. Since 1929 the Indian delegation came to be headed by an Indian himself. It may well be said that the foundations of India's international status were firmly laid even while India was yet a dependency by well-meaning and far-sighted Imperial statesmen.

The defects and anomalies of India's membership of the League did not hold good as far as membership of the International Labour Organisation was concerned, for in that body her independence was almost absolute and unquestioned.[1] As one of the eight leading industrial countries, India

1. See L. Sundaram, 'India and the International Labour Organization' in India Analysed, vol. i, ch. III, pp.67-88.

obtained a permanent seat on the governing body of the I.L.O., and in 1927 an Indian, Sir Atul Chatterjee, was elected president of the International Labour Conference.

Like the Dominions, India was represented at the various organizations and conferences of the League, and even at such international conferences outside the orbit of the League as those at Washington in 1921 and at Genoa in 1922. Like the Dominions, India was specifically exempted from incurring the liabilities of the Locarno settlement, and signed the Kellog-Briand Pact in her own right.

There was yet another recognition of India's coming nationhood. Fiscal autonomy had formed an important attribute of Dominion self-government. India was conceded the same autonomy in 1919. The Joint Select Committee had recommended: 'Whatever be the right fiscal policy for India, it is quite clear that she should have the same liberty to consider her interests as Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa.'[1] This recommendation was accepted and took effect in what came to be known as the 'fiscal convention' i.e. that the Government of India in framing its tariff policy should regard itself as the guardian of Indian interests, responsible to Indian opinion, and that, if the Government of India and the Indian Legislature agreed, the Secretary of State would not exercise his over-riding power on behalf of any British interest. Successive Secretaries of State faithfully upheld the convention. No Secretary of State,

1. H.C. 203, vol.i, p.11.

said Wedgwood Benn, in 1929, would 'attempt to lay a finger upon this principle of tariff autonomy which has been established in practice for 10 years in Indian affairs. There is Dominion Status in action. There is a Dominion attribute which has now become part and parcel of the rights of India.'[1]

Ordinarily commercial treaties between the United Kingdom and foreign countries contained a clause enabling India and other parts of the Empire to adhere to them at their option. But till 1929 India, unlike the Dominions, had not the right to conclude commercial treaties with foreign powers by direct negotiation without reference to the Government in London. Subject, however, to the reservations of the fiscal autonomy convention, the Government of India could, if they wished, advise the negotiation of separate commercial treaties to suit India's special requirements and such treaties could be concluded, signed and ratified in respect of India. Having no diplomatic representation abroad, she had necessarily to utilise the Foreign Office machinery for the purpose.[2] In September 1930 India entered into one such treaty with Turkey. India's position in all such matters was fast developing. In 1931 India appointed her Trade Commissioners to Hamburg, Alexandria and Zanzibar. In 1934 she negotiated a direct trade agreement with Japan.

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1. 233 H.C.Deb. 5s., col. 1556.
2. 'Note on the status and position of India in the British Empire', Memorandum presented to the Indian Statutory Commission by the Government of India, Report of the Indian Statutory Commission, vol.v, pp. 1331-38.

The Government of India's right to negotiate directly with the other parts of the Empire regarding Indian nationals was recognised at the Imperial Conference of 1921. In 1922 Srinivasa Sastri, on behalf of the Government of India, visited Australia, New Zealand and Canada in order to discuss with the governments of those Dominions the problem of Indian settlers. A separate department of the Government of India dealt with this subject and was presided over by an Indian. Under section 7 of the Indian Emigration Act of 1922 the Governor-General in Council was empowered to appoint Agents in any place outside British India for the purpose of safe-guarding the interests of Indian emigrants. In exercise of this power, Agents were appointed in Malaya and Ceylon. The Government of India entered into direct negotiation with the Government of the Union of South Africa regarding the treatment of Indian settlers in that country. After the successful termination of a round table conference with the Union Government, the Government of India appointed, at the request of the former, an Agent-General to South Africa in 1927 to watch over Indian interests.

Indian nationalists, in their rebellious impatience, made light of all these significant preparatory steps and dismissed the status accorded to India in the intra-Imperial and international spheres as a mere camouflage intended to disguise under forms the harsh fact of India's subordination to Britain. India's new status was, in truth, something more than a matter of form. It was a striking testimony to the fact

that the Government of India (including the Secretary of State) felt an Indian responsibility and not merely a British responsibility as to India. Moreover, it demonstrated clearly the sincerity of the British intention to raise India to the position of a self-governing Dominion. If that had not been the intention of British statesmen they would have never given India a footing and Indians a platform in the Imperial and the international world. India's gratitude to those Imperial statesmen who helped in creating a political personality out of a vast mass and gave her a recognised status in the world is great and real.

India, Britain and the Commonwealth.

Long and close association had made India almost a permanent part of the very life and thought of Britain. The mention of India's name had for the British a multitude of associations, symbolical and sentimental as much as practical. Whether they thought of her as 'the grim Stepmother of our kind' 'in ancient tattered raiment' [1] or 'the brightest jewel in the British Crown', India evoked deep emotions in the hearts of Englishmen. 'India,' wrote Dilke, 'ought always to be first in our minds when we are thinking of Greater Britain.' [2] Curzon owned that he could 'scarcely avoid the language of emotion' when speaking about India.[3] He had no

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1. 'Hard her service, poor her payment - she in ancient, tattered raiment -
India, she the grim Stepmother of our kind.' Kipling, 'Christmas in India', Rudyard Kipling's Verse, p.55.
2. Dilke, The British Empire, p.17.
3. Curzon, Subjects of the Day, p.27.

patience with the 'Colony-mad' [1] Chamberlain. 'I often wonder,' he wrote to Northbrook in 1903, 'what would have become of him and us, if he had ever visited India. He would have become the greatest Indian Imperialist of the time. The Colonies would have been dwarfed and forgotten, and the pivot of the Empire would have been Calcutta. Not having enjoyed this good fortune we are now forgotten and the Empire is to be bound together (or, as we are told, if the prescription is not taken, destroyed) without any apparent reference to its largest and most powerful unit.'[2] It pained Curzon that India, 'the only part of the British Empire which is an empire',[3] had no recognised place in the councils of the Empire. In a memorable address at Edinburgh in 1909, he reminded his countrymen that India had been the great determining influence in British foreign policy for more than a century and that the conquest and the government of India had given to England her place in the eyes of the world. India was, he said, the strategic centre of the defensive position of the Empire, the principal element in its fighting strength, the richest market for British manufactures, and the main field for the employment of British capital. But it was 'less in its material than its moral and educative aspects', remarked Curzon, that India had conferred 'so incomparable

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1. 'Chamberlain always seems to me Colony-mad.' Curzon to Hamilton, 24 June 1903.
2. Curzon to Northbrook, 12 August 1903, quoted in Ronaldshay, op.cit. vol. iii, p.24.
3. Curzon, The Place of India in the Empire, p.10.

a boon upon the British race', India had 'exalted and disciplined our character', developed in the British 'a sense of duty and a spirit of self-sacrifice, as well as faculties of administration and command'. He ended by pleading that India should be placed 'at the 'high table' in the banquet hall of the Empire states'.[1]

From Curzon, the 'Imperialist', to Morley, the 'anti-Imperialist', was a far cry. But even the great Radical, who felt bored with his Colonial kinsfolk,[2] felt the attraction of 'the most astonsihing part of the Empire'.[3] Referring to the objections of Alfred Deakin, the Australian Prime Minister, to India's representation at the Imperial Conference, he wrote to Minto in 1907: 'I laugh when I think of a man who blows the Imperial trumpet louder than other people, and yet would banish India, which is the most stupendous part of the Empire, into the Imperial back-kitchen.'[4] To him, as to Curzon, India was 'the only real Empire',[5] and

1. Ibid. pp. 10-11, 14, 28, 30, 46.
2. 'At this moment, people are going to be bored out of their lives (the boredom is already felt) by our Colonial kinsfolk.' Morley to Minto 12 April 1907; 'The Colonial Conference is becoming the greatest bore that ever was known.' Morley to Minto 26 April 1907; 'I am not at all without sympathy for your kindly views about our young Colonial kinsfolk. But say what you will, they are apt to be frightful bores, and if you had been condemned to eat between twenty meals day after day in their company, and to hear Deakin yarn away by the hour, I believe you would be as heartily glad to see their backs as I am.' Morley to Minto, 24 May 1907.
3. Morley to Minto, 12 April 1907.
4. Morley to Minto, 2 May 1907.
5. Morley, Indian Speeches, p.134.

noticing the scant attention paid to that country in the proceedings of the Imperial Press Conference in 1909, he could not but feel that 'the part of Hamlet was rather omitted'.[1]

It may well be that the India which Curzon and Morley prized so high was the ideal India - a magnificent pendant hanging from the Imperial collar - and what they resented was the lack of appreciation of their own exalted position as governors of that country. But even as such it was not without significance, for without the persistent advocacy of these ardent 'Indians'[2] India would have never secured her place in inter-Imperial and international organisations while she was yet a dependency.

If Englishmen could not think of the Empire without India, they could not easily reconcile themselves to the idea of a self-governing India going out of the Empire. To Philip Kerr in 1912 the ideal goal was clear, that 'some-day or other India should acquire the status of a self-governing Dominion', but 'she must for all time remain within the Empire'.[3] 'Commerce links us indissolubly,' he wrote, 'with India to-day and will continue to link us in the future. Strategy does so no less. We can never willingly acquiesce in the establishment of any foreign rule in India. We can

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1. Ibid. p.135.
2. The phrase is Morley's. See Morley to Minto, 26 March 1908.
3. 'India and the Empire', The Round Table, September 1912, p. 623; Butler, op.cit. p.175. The psychologist might detect an element of possessive love in this attitude.

never willingly see a regenerated India become an independent power. We should no more welcome Indian dreadnoughts in Indian waters, controlled by an independent Indian Government, than we should welcome the battleships of Russia or Japan. That is the cardinal feature of the future policy of Britain in India.'[1]

When in the Empire's greatest emergency, during the war, India proved herself to be not a cause of trouble, but a tower of strength, it was universally recognised that she had qualified for closer partnership on equal terms. Even the most conservative imperialist in England was converted to the long-cherished dream of Indian nationalists of a self-governing India on the Dominion model. It might well appear to-day that there was something wooden and unimaginative about applying the concept of Dominion Status to an ancient country like India, but anyone who tries to recapture the glow of those wartime years, both in England and India, would hesitate to pass such a judgment. After all, it was Indians who had demanded it, and Britain on her part had nothing else to offer but the fruits of her history. To have cherished any other ideal would have meant being false to the two hundred years of common history.[2]

The policy found the man. To Montagu 'the only imperialism that was worth having was a trusteeship which was

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1. The Round Table, September 1912, p.622.
2. It is significant that the concept of Dominion Status, though advocated by some, was not applied to Egypt. See Report of the Special Mission to Egypt, 1921, Cmd. 1131, p.18.

intended to develop the country under the British flag into a partnership in the Commonwealth'.[1] India was the mastering passion of his life.[2] She played 'the same part in his political life that the great Overseas Dominions did in the life and in the heart of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain'.[3] When the Government of India Bill passed the Commons in December 1919, Montagu called it 'the proudest moment' of his life, for he had kept before him 'one ambition' and that was to have the privilege of commending to Parliament what he believed to be 'the only justification of Empire, a step of self-government for India'.[4] Among the makers of modern India and the Commonwealth his name must always rank high.

India, in a way, contributed to the widening of the concept of the Empire. In response to the challenge posed by her England realised that it was not enough to govern a people justly, the latter must be taught to govern themselves. And so the great experiment began in India: how to carry a part of the Empire, peopled by men of alien religions and races, by safe and ordered stages from autocracy to self-government - a transformation seldom achieved in human history without violent convulsions. India became the symbol and the test of the project of the Commonwealth. In a more fundamental sense than the Dominions, she held the key to the problem of Imperium et Libertas. If she could evolve to self-

1. 122 H.C.Deb. 5s., col. 835.
2. 'I love this country; it is where I am happiest.' Montagu, An Indian Diary, p. 363; 'The fascination of India's problems have obsessed me all my life.' 151 H.C.Deb. 5s., coll. 2303-4.
3. Crewe, 37 H.L.Deb., col. 993.
4. 122 H.C.Deb. 5s., col. 835.

government within the Empire, it would not only provide a signal proof of the constructive genius of the British people, but also carry forward the evolution of the Empire into a true multi-racial Commonwealth.[1] Nor was the experience to be a gain to the Commonwealth alone. As Curtis wrote: 'In solving the problem of responsible government this vast and complex Oriental community will find she has solved it for the whole of Asia, and, in the fullness of time, for Africa as well. The greatest of all the services which one nation can render to another is example. For the greatest of problems are common to many: and solved by one, they are solved by many. Three continents are now living in the rays of a candle lighted by England centuries ago. India now has a candle which once kindled will never be put out till all the nations of Asia and Africa walk by its light.'[2]

The long-term common interests of Britain and India were too substantial to be wholly obscured from view by the dust-storm of Indian nationalist agitation. India occupied a strategic position along the lines of British

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1. That India was a test-case was recognised even by foreign observers. An American historian of the Commonwealth wrote in 1928: 'If India becomes a Dominion, then will the balance swing toward the Commonwealth idea; if India continues subordinate to Great Britain, or becomes independent, then is the ideal of the Commonwealth but very partially attained.' W.P.Hall, Empire to Commonwealth, pp. 490-1.
2. Curtis, Dyarchy, p.lxi.

communication between Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. She was the keystone of the Imperial defence system. She could be, as the First World War proved and the Second was to confirm, Britain's greatest military asset. The key to the security and continued stability of South-East Asia lay with the Indian sub-continent. From the Indian point of view, it was patent to all but the nationalist hotheads that India, with her comparatively undeveloped military and industrial resources, would need the continued cooperation of Great Britain for quite some time. In the defence of the Indian Ocean area and in the maintenance of a balance of power throughout the Eurasian continent, a future self-governing India and Britain were to have a common concern. It was a pity that Indian leaders wasted - and were allowed to waste - so much of their time and energy in demanding cuts in the army expenditure and the rapid Indianisation of the army, for it precluded them from learning the basic realities and requirements of Indian defence.

The economic lives of India and Britain were almost inextricably interwoven. The United Kingdom was the biggest supplier of manufactured goods to India and the largest single consumer of her raw

materials.[1] Till the end of the 'twenties India was still Britain's best customer, taking roughly 10 per cent of her total exports.[2]

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1. A. Percentage division of India's imports on private account.

Year	U.K.	Empire	Foreign
1913-4	62.8	69.7	30.3
1918-9	56.5	65.4	34.6
1923-4	57.6	65.2	34.8
1928-9	44.7	54.1	45.9

B. Percentage division of India's exports on private account:

Year	U.K.	Empire	Foreign
1913-4	25.1	41.1	58.9
1918-9	31.1	51.7	48.3
1923-4	24.2	41.4	58.6
1928-9	21.4	40.1	59.9

C. Value of India's sea-borne trade on private account with the U.K. in lakhs of rupees:

Year	Imports	Exports
1913-4	91,58	56,30
1918-9	83,56	69,62
1923-4	146,43	73,04
1928-9	113,24	72,37

Source: W.R.Rayner, India's Fiscal Policy and Trade, pp. 224, 226, 293.

2. Value (in £'000) and direction of U.K.exports: (including re-exports) during the years 1927, 1928 and 1929:

	1927	1928	1929
Canada	31,360	37,029	37,511
Australia	63,742	57,938	56,340
New Zealand	20,400	20,051	22,186
South Africa	31,843	33,107	34,109
Irish Free State	45,566	44,721	46,297
British India	86,337	85,068	79,372
Other British countries	69,446	72,533	71,698
Total British Countries	348,694	350,447	347,513
United States	66,875	68,730	62,016
Europe	274,610	272,844	279,927
Other foreign countries	141,855	151,841	149,595
Total foreign countries	483,340	493,415	491,538
Total	832,034	843,862	839,051

Source: Tables relating to the external trade of the U.K., the Dominions and India with British and foreign countries, Cmd. 3691, 1930, pp. 2-3.

British shipping lines had a virtual control of transport for Indian trade. The total of British capital investments in India by 1929 was variously estimated to be between £500 million and £1,000 million.[1] A significant development in the financial sphere was the increasing intermingling of British and Indian capital. Indian nationalists had only to blame themselves if the irresponsible talk about expropriation of 'British vested interests' and repudiation of 'unjust financial liabilities' in which some of them indulged, alarmed British economic interests in India and prompted them to seek constitutional safeguards. British economic interests in India stood for gradual and ordered political advance. They feared - not unnaturally - that any precipitate withdrawal of British authority would plunge the country into anarchy and thus injure them. They also feared discrimination at the hands of Indians and sought to fortify their position by legal safeguards. But it would be wrong to conclude - as so many Indians did - that British economic interests acted as a drag on Indian constitutional advance, or that the economic motive prompted Britain to delay the transfer of power to India. Though it would be rash to dogmatise on the point, for economic interests are so various and work in such a diverse manner at different periods, indications are not wanting that Indian patriots had in the

1. See the Financial Times, 9 January 1930; W.Y.Elliott, The New British Empire, pp. 193-4; R.P.Dutt, India Today, p.147.

British business community, on the whole, an ally and not an opponent. Lord Winterton, for long the Under-Secretary of State for India, testifies that one of the most powerful reasons for the extension of self-government in India leading eventually to independence was the insistence of British financial and economic interests in that country that such an extension was advisable from their own point of view. They pleaded, both in public and private, that opposition to Indian political aspirations would mean losing the good will of the consumers of British trade in India, and they assured that 'the interaction of common interests of Anglo-Indian trade were such that, given good will on both sides, it would flourish after India attained independence.' 'Some prominent businessmen in India,' says Winterton, 'went further, and told me that they thought it would increase, because the objection to buying British goods would disappear.' 'It is not surprising,' he comments, 'that among the 'Die-hards' with Indian experience who opposed the advance of Indian self-government there were hardly any British businessmen of experience. The majority were former civil servants and officers of the Indian army.....'[1] Similarly, the Indian business community, with all its grievances against and jealousy of long-established British rivals, was practical-minded enough, to appreciate the enormous advantages of Indo-British economic collaboration. It acted a a moderating influence on nationalist agitation in India,

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1. Winterton, Orders of the Day, pp. 190-91.

through its hold on the Congress, and was a powerful factor working in favour of retaining the Commonwealth connection.

Sentimental, political, commercial and strategical considerations there were many - and they were often emphasised - which made Englishmen value the association of a future self-governing India with the British Commonwealth. But there was a more generous dream which appealed to liberal minds. The great peril to humanity in the 'twenties appeared to be the antagonism between the European and the non-European peoples. There could be no more effectual way of obviating the spectre of this tragic struggle haunting mankind than by fashioning a political system within the framework of which one of the greatest of Asiatic peoples and one of the greatest of European peoples lived together on a footing of equality, justice and mutual respect. Would not a Commonwealth, with India as its member, be an irrefutable demonstration in practice that a modus vivendi between Europeans and Asiatics could be found? Would it not provide a bridge between the two great sections of humanity, between the West and East. 'A great ideal, a noble one, a fruitful one, partnership of the East and West in a great community of nations,' Lloyd George called it.[1] 'The West needs the East,' Ben Spoor told the Indian National Congress in 1920, 'as much as the East needs the West. I pray to God that the day is not far distant when you people will secure real freedom, political, economic and spiritual. When you

1. 231 H.C.Deb. 5s., col. 1316. See also Cmd. 1474, pp.15-6.

have secured that freedom it may be that we people in the West will also secure our freedom by your help when the time comes. And when that time comes I hope that we will get beyond the little cry of India for Indians and Britain for the British. I hope that day will reveal a new slogan - a worthier one, a better one - not India for the Indians, nor Britain for the British but the whole world for a free humanity.'[1] 'Upon the success of this endeavour,' said Irwin, 'issues more profound than either Indian or British depend.' 'By the light of vision and faith', he saw 'the great design' - 'the building firm of a political fabric in which India may realise her destiny and where East and West alike may freely offer their peculiar gifts for the common service of mankind'.[2]

This was an ideal that had long been cherished by Indian nationalists: India to provide the meeting ground for the Occident and the Orient; her connection with England to be the symbol and instrument of a larger union of mankind. It was for this reason that Gokhale considered the British connection to be 'providential'. He believed that his country was eminently equipped to act as an interpreter between Asia and Europe, for, as he wrote: 'In the case of other countries, the contact of the West with the East is largely external only; in India the West has, so to say, entered into the very bone and marrow of the East.'[3] This

1. Report of the thirty-fifth Indian National Congress, 1920, p. 69.
2. Irwin, Speeches, vol.i, p.587.
3. Gokhale, 'East and West in India', The Hindustan Review, July 1911, p.2.

was also the burden of Tagore's message.[1] To Srinivasa Sastri the British Commonwealth stood unique in the world 'for the reconciliation of the East and the West'.[2] 'The British Empire,' said Tilak, 'is already a League of Nations. Why should Indians - believers in a world polity wish to separate from the British Commonwealth of Nations?'[3] The 'deep spiritual significance' of the Commonwealth idea appealed to C.R.Das and he believed that it was 'for the good of India, for the good of the world, that India should strive for freedom within the Commonwealth, and so serve the cause of humanity'.[4]

Two hundred years of common history and intimate contact had made England enter 'into the very bone and marrow' of India. It would be no exaggeration to say that Indian nationalists were more Anglo-Indian than Indian. Howsoever much they might have denounced the British Raj and even attempted to fly away from British civilisation, they could not hide the fact that they were the products of that very Raj and civilisation. Sapru and Sastri, Jinnah and Jayakar, Malaviya and Mohamed Ali - all lisped in English numbers. They were the living embodiments of all that was best in Indian culture, but profoundly influenced by the English. 'I owe everything that I have got to English education,'[5] frankly confessed Motilal Nehru before he

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1. Tagore, Nationalism.
2. Srinivasa Sastri, Speeches and Writings, p.251.
3. Karandikar, op.cit. p.579.
4. P.C.Ray, Life and Times of C.R.Das, pp.248 -9.
5. Quoted in Ranga Iyer, How to Lose India?, p.73.

became a non-cooperator. And his son - 'the young Harrovian communist',[1] as The Times called him, - admitted later: 'Personally I owe too much to England in my mental make-up ever to feel wholly alien to her.'[2] Britain not only ruled India, she also claimed a portion of the Indian mind and the Indian heart. In this lay the secret of imperial achievement in India.

The inevitable bitterness created by the nationalist movement and its periodical repression coloured Indian patriotism with a steadily increasing antipathy towards their rulers. It was intensified by a distrust in British intentions. In the minds of many Indians the sense of subjection bit so deep that they wanted to cut themselves away from their past by severing all relations with Britain. But there were many others who, conscious of what they owed to England and of the close ties woven by a long connection, did not allow their patriotism to take an anti-British hue. 'With all our grievances against the English nation, I cannot help loving your country,' wrote Tagore to Andrews.[3] Mohamed Ali told British statesmen at the Round Table Conference in 1930: 'We have a soft corner in our hearts for Great Britain. Let us retain it, I beseech you.'[4] Mrs. Sarojini Naidu affirmed that it was 'impossible' for her 'to be unfriendly to

1. The Times, 2 January 1930.
2. J. Nehru, An Autobiography, p.419.
3. 10 April 1921, Andrews, Letters to a Friend, p.152.
4. Cmd. 3778, p.103.

England'. 'My dreams for India,' she remarked have their roots deep down in my heart, but my friendships and associations with England have their roots intertwined with the roots of my dreams for India.' And she hoped that British statesmanship would enable her to continue cherishing these 'twin loyalties'.[1] The 'twenties were rather clouded years in Anglo-Indian relations. But there were men on both sides who rose above the prevailing distrust, bitterness and hostility. Truly did Irwin remark in 1929 that if Indians and Englishmen were tempted to mistrust each other in the twentieth century, both India and Great Britain would be judged in the twenty-first by the degree to which they had 'refused to lose faith in one another'.[2] The time of judgment has come even earlier.

There was no greater friend of the English people in India than that so-called arch enemy of British rule, Gandhi. Chief amongst the services which he rendered to India and the Commonwealth was that he saved Indian nationalism from becoming narrow, violent, racial, or isolationist. 'I cannot, I will not hate Englishmen. Nor will I bear their yoke,'[3] he insisted. It was his firm and consistent belief that freedom in association with Britain was preferable to the one without that association. It sprang from his faith in human nature, his philosophy of non-violence and his ideal of

1. Cmd. 3997, pp. 263-4.
2. Irwin, Speeches, vol. i, pp.539-40.
3. Report of the thirty-ninth Indian National Congress, 1924, p.26.

human brotherhood. He did not allow Indian nationalism to get into the strait jacket of secession or republicanism. He forced the fundamentalists and separatists in India to argue their case on a high moral level, free from distorting emotion and prejudice. He wanted the ability to be totally independent without asserting that independence. 'Any scheme that I would frame,' he said, 'while Britain declares her goal about India to be complete equality within the Empire, would be that of alliance and not of independence without alliance.'[1] His ambition was much higher than independence. Through the deliverance of India he sought to deliver the weaker races of the earth. He was anxious to convert Englishmen and witness the quiet transformation of the British Empire into a real Commonwealth of Nations. He aspired to be a citizen of such a Commonwealth. He sought free and equal partnership for India with Great Britain 'not merely for the benefit of India, and not merely for mutual benefit', but 'in order that the great weight that is crushing the world to atoms may be lifted from its shoulders'.[2]

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1. Ibid.
2. Cmd. 3997, p.394.

Some Concluding Reflections

Early Indian nationalists took British rule for granted as if, so to speak, it was the order of nature. They, however, desired that it should transform itself into a national government by identifying itself completely with the interests of the Indian people. They gloried in their membership of the Empire, but demanded that the rights and privileges of British citizenship be gradually extended to them and such modifications be made in the character of British administration that in the fulness of time India might become self-governing like the Colonies.

British imperial thinking, until almost the coming of the First World War, was dominated by the concept of the two empires. Most Conservatives and Liberals shared the belief that Oriental communities were incapable of self-government. That the Indian Empire was artificial and could not last long - for a vast population could not be held down indefinitely by relays of Englishmen - was widely felt or feared, but nobody seemed to know how it would end. Conditions which had made the establishment of British rule possible in India were fast changing - mainly as a result of that rule itself - but there was little conscious effort to direct these changes towards a preconceived and definite goal. That British policy in regard to Indian political aspirations was on the whole liberal and progressive cannot be doubted. But until 1917 it lacked sense of direction and purpose. The reforms of 1892

and 1909 did not attempt to shift the foundations of British rule in India, but merely to adjust the machinery of British Government to the changed circumstances in the country. They aimed at associating Indians more closely with administration and allowing them more opportunities to influence it, while maintaining intact its foreign and autocratic character.

Accidents of time and circumstance aided the rapid growth of Indian political aspirations. By the first decade of the twentieth century the ideal of self-government on the Colonial model came to be definitely adopted. It was dismissed as chimerical by responsible statesmen of the Empire. The more youthful radicals in India began to talk of secession as a combative response. Whereas Indian nationalists complained that their rulers lacked the will to promote their political advance on the lines of the Dominions, the latter pointed out that the will depended upon the way, which was so difficult to find. Perhaps, both were right.

The war brought about a change in the angle of vision. It was thought in England that India could develop on the lines of the self-governing Dominions. The concept of Dominion Status came to be applied to India by the declaration of August 1917. The period of doubt had culminated in an act of faith. By the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms of 1919 a certain measure of responsible government was introduced in the provinces and it was hoped that if the experiment succeeded it would be extended till India attained self-government like the Dominions.

The non-cooperation movement ruined the fair hopes of 1919. Indian impatience and intransigence hardened British opinion against further political advance and revived doubts about the capacity of Indians to work self-governing institutions. Howsoever justified the non-cooperation movement might have been as a moral protest and whatever its contribution towards building up a strong national movement in India, there can be little doubt that but for it the pace of constitutional advance in India would have been faster.

Early in the 'twenties Indian public opinion became unanimous on the point - and perhaps only on this point - that the time had come for a more or less final settlement of the Indian problem - a settlement by which the provinces would attain full responsible government and at the centre all subjects, except foreign affairs, defence and relations with Indian states, would be transferred to an Indian government responsible to an elected majority. It demanded that schemes should be framed which would ensure complete Indianisation of the army and the civil services within a reasonable period of 25 or 30 years. By the end of that period it hoped to see the remaining subjects at the centre also to be transferred to a responsible Indian government. For any such quasi-final arrangement the British Government were not yet prepared; nor did they think that India was ripe for it. Indians wanted to have a definite vision of the goal with the milestones on the journey clearly marked out. The

traditional dislike of the English for any such definite and explicit arrangement was reinforced by a vivid recognition of the immense difficulties and complexities of the Indian problem. It may even be doubted if many British statesmen had taken into account the full implications of the announcement of 1917 and the reforms of 1919. It was generally assumed that the introduction of responsible government in India would be a slow and long-drawn-out affair. This plan of slow-motion advance being rudely disturbed by the march of events in India, there developed a tendency on the part of British statesmen to wait on events instead of thinking out and working out a bolder plan of campaign. There were second thoughts about the advisability of granting Dominion Status to an India instinct with hostility to British rule. The development and definition of Dominion Status after the war further encouraged the sceptics. The British attempted to deal with the Indian problem as political engineers rather than as psychologists. The dangers of going fast were realised but not those of delay.[1]

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1. It is significant that as late as December 1939 the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, believed that a slow pace was best calculated to hold India to the Empire: 'But there is also our own position in India to be taken into account. After all we framed the Constitution as it stands in the Act of 1935, because we thought that way the best way - given the political position in both countries - of maintaining British influence in India. It is no part of our policy, I take it, to expedite in India constitutional changes for their own sake, or gratuitously to hurry the handing over of controls to Indian hands at any pace faster than we regard as best calculated on a long view, to hold India to the Empire.' Linlithgow to Zetland, 28 December 1939; Zetland, '<u>Essayez</u>' p.277.

The question whether or not a future self-governing India should continue to remain within the British Commonwealth was a living political issue in India during the 'twenties. The words 'Empire' and 'Imperialism' had fallen into disrepute. They smacked of racialism, domination and exploitation. Imperial citizenship lost its halo to those who felt that they were being denied freedom within their own country and humiliated in other parts of the Empire because they were Indians. The policies of racial discrimination pursued in South Africa and Kenya acted as a constant irritant to Indian nationalists.

The older and moderate Congressmen would have been satisfied with Dominion Status if granted in time. They interpreted Dominion Status to mean perfect equality with Great Britain and freedom to secede at will. Like the Liberals, they demanded Dominion Status, with reservations for the transitional period, to be granted to India immediately. They desired to see the British Empire quietly transform itself into a real Commonwealth of Nations. They were anxious to preserve the British connection, for they valued the continued cooperation of the British people. Freedom within the Empire was to them preferable to freedom outside the Empire. It was not merely a matter of common material interests, but of sentiment and of principle. They cherished the ideal of the Commonwealth for the higher purposes it could serve - the promotion of international freedom, peace and brotherhood.

The younger and more radical elements within the Congress considered the British Commonwealth to be a mere euphemism for the British Empire. They believed that India could never attain complete political and economic freedom unless she severed the British connection. To them the banner was as important as the forward march. Dominion Status was in their eyes a status of servitude. It was a wrong ideology, an uninspiring ideal. While frustration and racial hostility prompted some of them to desire the complete severance of the British connection, there were others who, under the influence of Marxism, imagined themselves to be engaged in a crusade against Imperialism. There were also many who entertained vague visions of an Asiatic Federation.

The Liberals interpreted Dominion Status in its widest possible sense. To them it meant 'independence plus'. They were Anglophiles and convinced believers in the Commonwealth connection. The latter, in their view, was the guarantee of India's safe and ordered progress towards national freedom. They valued the Commonwealth as an association of the freest and most progressive nations in the world, and as an institution likely to serve the higher purpose of reconciling the East and the West.

The Muslims had their loyalists in the Aga Khan and Muhammad Shafi. They had their liberals in men like Jinnah and Ali Imam. Nor did they lack their quota of moderate and extreme nationalists. The Muslims had in Pan-Islamism a

competing and far more compelling ideal. Many of their leaders cherished lively dreams of a Commonwealth of Islam.

What did the British Commonwealth mean to those Indians who did value it? To them it meant association with a country - Great Britain - for which, in spite of all the heat and passion of the nationalist struggle, they had a warm feeling. It signified the continuance of a long connection. They looked upon the Commonwealth as a minor League of Nations, an embryonic prototype for a wider international system. They valued it as a bridge between the East and the West, between diverse races, creeds and civilisations. They prized the Commonwealth not so much for the promotion of common material interests in trade and defence, for the prevailing exaggerations and misconceptions of the nationalist era did not allow many Indians to gauge correctly their significance, as for the advancement of the higher ideals of justice, freedom, equality, peace and concord in the whole world.

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